



Social Anxiety Disorder



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This document has been translated into other languages.
In case of any discrepancy or inconsistency, the English version shall prevail.

What is Social Anxiety Disorder?

Social anxiety disorder is characterized by persistent strong fears of being judged by others and being embarrassed in social situations. This fear can be so strong that individuals with this disorder may stay away from places or events where they think they might do something embarrassing them, or would remain quiet in social situations to avoid drawing attention from others. When getting along with others, individuals with this disorder would blush, tremble, sweat, feel dizzy, and tend to have palpitations, difficulty breathing, and a hard time talking to others even though they wish they could.

What are the causes of Social Anxiety Disorder?

There is no single cause of social anxiety disorder, but researchers have identified a number of risk factors :

- Biological factors
Heredity, chemical imbalances of neurotransmitters.
- Psychological factors
People who are introverted, passive, perfectionistic, or having low self-esteem.
- Environmental factors
Negative social experiences which caused embarrassment or humiliation, or stressful events in life such as relationship breakdown and job stress.

How do I know if I have Social Anxiety Disorder?

1. A marked and persistent fear of social situations in which the individual believe they may be judged for acting in a way that's embarrassing or humiliating, such as when joining a group discussion, dating a friend, talking to people with authority, and attending parties.
2. Avoidance of anxiety-producing social situations; or when the situations cannot be avoided, the affected individual would remain quiet to avoid drawing attention to self, or endure the situations with intense anxiety or distress.

3. The anxiety level is out of proportion for the situation and is unreasonable.
4. The avoidance behaviours or anxiety interfere with daily living, work and social life, or causing great distress.

What are the treatments for Social Anxiety Disorder?

1. Drug treatment

For individuals with severe anxiety symptoms, they can take prescribed medication to alleviate the symptoms.

2. Psychotherapy

Cognitive-behavioural therapy is an effective treatment for social anxiety disorder. It is designed to help individuals modifying their irrational anxiety-provoking thoughts, and to confront the anxiety-provoking situations in a gradual manner, with the aim of reducing one's anxiety and expanding one's comfort zone. Initially, individuals will feel uneasy when facing anxiety-provoking situations in therapy, but with repeated exposure, anxiety will be reduced gradually.

3. Social Skills Training and Relaxation Exercises

Through receiving coaching and feedback, observation of role models, and participation in role-plays, the social skills of individuals with social anxiety disorder can be enhanced, which in turn helps enhancing their confidence in social situations. Alternatively, individuals can learn relaxation techniques to help reduce their anxiety.

How can I help myself manage Social Anxiety Disorder?

1. Seek treatment actively and participate in the process.
2. Maintain a health lifestyle : have a healthy and balanced diet, exercise regularly and moderately, and cultivate meaningful hobbies.
3. Do relaxation exercises regularly.
4. Take the first step towards overcoming your social anxiety by making a commitment to face your difficulties courageously.