



NHS

Cumbria, Northumberland,
Tyne and Wear
NHS Foundation Trust

Social Anxiety

Easy read information



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A member of staff or a carer can support you to read this booklet. They will be able to answer any questions that you have.

About this leaflet

- This leaflet is for people who suffer from shyness and social anxiety. This means feeling very nervous when you are with other people.
- It will tell you how you might feel.
- It will tell you where you can go to get help.

What is shyness and social anxiety?



Being shy or nervous in front of people you don't know very well is usually normal.

For some people, they are very shy and very nervous and it affects the way they behave.

It might make them feel very frightened to go out.

It might make them feel like the way they act or the things they do will be embarrassing for everyone there.

Sometimes people think that everyone else will think they are a bad person or be laughing at them, or think they are stupid.



What happens to your body?



When you get very nervous and shy in front of other people, your body changes. You might feel:

- Like your heart is beating hard and fast.
- Your chest might feel tight and it might be harder to breathe.
- Your hands or feet might go numb.
- Like you have butterflies in your stomach.
- Sweating and dizzy or sick.
- Your face might go red. This is called blushing.



You might change the way you live your life:

- Staying in and not seeing your friends and family.
- Not talking to people on the telephone.
- Ask other people to do things for you, like go out shopping.
- You might find it hard to relax so you might drink or smoke more.



Why do some people have shyness and social anxiety?



Anyone can be shy or have social anxiety. Lots of people think that if you have a poor opinion of yourself, you are more likely to be nervous around people and shy.

Some people find they are shy and nervous when they are younger, but as they grow older, they get more confident and feel better about themselves.

What can I do to help feel better?

There are lots of things you can try to start to feel less shy and nervous.

First of all you should try to understand what social anxiety means to you.



Think about:

- How you feel when you are nervous or shy.
- When you feel nervous and shy – what are you doing and who are you with?
- What works to make you feel better.

You can start to think about why you feel like you do and work on one problem at a time.



Next you could think, write or draw a picture of how you see yourself when you are shy or nervous. Doing this might help you to stop thinking of yourself in that way.



When you are out and about and start to feel shy or nervous, try not to concentrate on how you are feeling – think about what is going on around you and the other people you are with. Try to see that people are not staring at you or laughing at you.



Finally you can try to face your fears. Think about the things that make you feel shy or nervous and try to tackle them one at a time. Start with the thing you are least frightened of and slowly work your way up to the thing that frightens you most. You can get help to do this.

Make sure when you breathe it is slow and steady and not too fast as this can make you feel worse.



You could also try to relax by listening to music or watching TV or doing some exercise.

Try a new hobby as this will help you to take your mind off being shy and nervous.

Where to get more help

If you would like to get more help or information about stress, you can get in touch with these people:

Anxiety Care UK
Working with you towards recovery

Anxiety Care

Help with feeling nervous or tense.

www.anxietycare.org.uk



Mind Infoline

Help, information and support.

Telephone: 0300 123 3393

Email: info@mind.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk



Rethink

Information and help for anyone who has mental health problems.

Advice Service: 0808 801 0525

Email: advice@rethink.org

www.rethink.org



You can also get help and information from your doctor or nurse.



Easy Read version developed by:

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www.cntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp

Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 246 7288

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