PRIOR MINDSET

SOCIAL ANXIETY (SOCIAL PHOBIA DISORDER)

ADULTS AND CHILDREN

What is Social Anxiety Disorder?



Social anxiety disorder, also known as social phobia, is a persistent and overwhelming fear of social situations. It typically begins during the teenage years and can significantly affect daily life. While individuals may experience improvement as they age, some may require treatment to manage their symptoms effectively.

Symptoms of Social Anxiety



Social anxiety is more than just shyness. It involves a fear that interferes with daily activities, self-confidence, relationships, and performance at work or school. Key symptoms include:

- Excessive worry about everyday activities like meeting new people, starting conversations, or speaking on the phone.
- Avoidance of social activities such as group conversations, eating with others, or attending parties.
- Constant fear of embarrassment, such as blushing or sweating.
- Difficulty performing tasks when being watched.
- Fear of criticism, low self-esteem, and avoidance of eye contact.
- Physical symptoms like nausea, sweating, trembling, or a pounding heart.

- Panic attacks in response to social situations.

Individuals with social anxiety may also experience other mental health conditions, such as depression or generalized anxiety disorder.

When to Seek Help

If social anxiety is affecting your life, it's important to seek help from a GP. Social anxiety is a common issue, and treatments are available. Visit WWW.PRIORMINDSET.COM to book a free 15-minute CBT consultation and discover how I can help you manage and overcome your social phobia challenges.

Self-Help Tips

Here are self-help strategies to consider:

- **Understand Your Anxiety:** Reflect on your thoughts and behaviours in social situations. Keeping a diary can be helpful.
- **Relaxation Techniques:** Practice breathing exercises to reduce stress.
- **Break Down Situations:** Tackle challenging situations in smaller steps.
- **Focus on Others:** Pay attention to what others are saying rather than assuming the worst.
- NHS Guide on Anxiety, Fear, and Panic
- NHS Self-Help Guide for Social Anxiety

Treatments for Social Anxiety

Treatment options include:

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** This therapy helps you find and change negative thought patterns. CBT can be done individually, in a group, or with family involvement.

- **Guided Self-Help:** Work through a CBT-based workbook or online course with therapist support.
- **Antidepressants:** Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) like escitalopram or sertraline are sometimes prescribed but usually not for children.

A combination of treatments may be necessary, and CBT is often the first line of treatment.

Support Groups

These organisations provide support for those with social anxiety:

- Anxiety UK
- Mind
- Triumph Over Phobia (TOP UK)

Social Anxiety in Children

Social anxiety disorder in children and teens involves an excessive, persistent fear of social and performance situations, such as school, parties, and sports. These children worry intensely about doing something embarrassing or being judged by others, feeling as though they are constantly "on stage." This often leads to self-consciousness, distress, and avoidance of social situations. It's important to distinguish between being shy and having social anxiety disorder.

Facts

- **Onset:** Typically begins in early adolescence but can start during elementary school.
- **Development:** Can arise suddenly after a stressful event or gradually over time.

- **Family History:** Social anxiety may run in families, suggesting a possible genetic part.
- **Prevalence:** About 7% of children may be diagnosed with social anxiety in any given school year, affecting children equally.
- **Associated Issues:** Poor school performance, low self-confidence, difficulty forming friendships, depression, and potential substance use.

Signs & Symptoms

Thoughts:

- "I'm going to say something stupid."
- "They won't like me."
- "I'm an idiot."
- "People can tell I'm anxious."

Physical Sensations:

- Stomach-ache
- Blushing
- Sweating
- Shaking
- Muscle tension
- Irritability
- Feeling detached from one's body (derealization)

Emotions:

- Anxiety, worry, or fear.
- Embarrassment
- Shame
- Helplessness
- Sadness
- Anger

Behaviours:

- School refusal
- Avoiding new activities or places
- Requesting a parent's presence
- Declining social invitations
- Not taking part in class
- Crying or tantrums
- Avoiding social events without a parent
- Poor eye contact or mumbling
- Staying home instead of socializing

Common Situations Affected

- Public speaking or performing (e.g., class presentations, recitals)
- Participating in class (e.g., answering questions, reading aloud)
- Eating in front of others
- Using public restrooms
- Socializing with peers
- Communicating via email, text, or phone

- Attending social events (e.g., birthday parties, dances)
- Interacting with adults (e.g., teachers)
- Dating and expressing opinions
- Ordering food at a restaurant

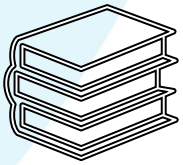


This PriorMindset information sheet highlights the importance of recognising the signs and symptoms of social anxiety disorder in children to ensure prompt intervention and support.

Treatments for children are like those for adults, though medication is usually avoided. Therapy is custom to the child's age and often involves parental participation.

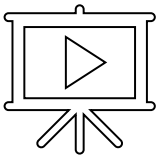
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Additional Resources



- What Is Social Anxiety? by Rachel Ehmke - *Explore a detailed overview of social anxiety disorder.*
- Social Anxiety Disorder Explained for Beginners - *An introductory video on understanding social anxiety.*

Videos for Children



- What Is Social Anxiety? - *A child-friendly video explaining social anxiety.*
- Symptoms and Strategies for Social Anxiety in Children and Teens - *Learn about common symptoms and coping strategies.*

- [8 Signs You Might Have Social Anxiety (Psych2Go)] - *A video highlighting key signs of social anxiety.*

References

Ehmke, R. (n.d.). *What Is Social Anxiety?* Child Mind Institute. Retrieved from https://childmind.org/article/what-is-social-anxiety/

NHS. (n.d.). *Social anxiety (social phobia)*. NHS. Retrieved August 9, 2024, from https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/social-anxiety/