

Social Anxiety and young people

mindcheck.ca

Social anxiety becomes an issue when worries about being negatively judged by others interfere with your school, your work, or your ability to enjoy day-to-day life.

what is social anxiety?

Most people can relate to occasionally feeling nervous, shy or self-conscious when meeting someone new, being in a large group of people you don't know well, or when making a presentation to a group of people. It is a feeling that is easy to relate to; worrying about what others will think of us and hoping we don't do something to embarrass ourselves is a common experience for most people.

These feelings can even help us to be more tuned into the feelings and needs of others. Fortunately, these feelings and thoughts are usually temporary and subside after a short period of time once we're comfortable or when the "spotlight" moves off us.

Sometimes social anxiety goes beyond these typical experiences. As levels of social anxiety increase, it can lead a person to avoid some social situations, to be very distressed when in the presence of others, to continually worry about being negatively judged by others, or to miss out on things they want or need to do. For some people, the worry and fear can become so intense they avoid situations involving other people altogether.

Social anxiety can have a significant impact on a person's life as there is so much interpersonal interaction in our daily lives. If you think social anxiety may be interfering with your life, it's time to check it out.



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mindcheck.ca encourages the early detection and intervention of mental health and substance use issues in British Columbian teens and young adults.

what to look for

Some of the thoughts, feelings, physical changes and experiences that suggest social anxiety might be an issue include:

Thoughts and Feelings:

- Continually worrying about what others think of you.
- Replaying a conversation and thinking about what you should have said or done differently.
- Worrying for days, weeks or even months about an upcoming social situation.
- Feeling very stressed when you're being watched by others, especially people you don't know.
- Always worrying you will embarrass yourself or that others will laugh at you.
- Feeling concerned that others will notice that you're nervous, sweating or blushing.
- Wanting to make more friends or socialize more, but being stopped by fear.
- Believing that others will find you boring and uninteresting.
- Experiencing a lot of distress when you are the centre of attention.

Physical Changes:

- Blushing
- Excessive sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Dry throat
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Racing heart
- Feeling faint
- Difficulty speaking (e.g., shaky voice or stammering)
- Rigid routines and rituals.

Learn more at mindcheck.ca.

avoid “just coping”

Some coping strategies may help to prevent negative feelings associated with social interactions or may reduce stress levels in the moment, but they don't help a person to have positive social experiences over the long-term.

Below are common examples of coping strategies. If you can identify with these behaviours, mindcheck.ca offers links to resources that may help you to become more comfortable in social situations.

- Staying quiet or “fading into the background” so people won't notice you.
- Sitting alone, walking out of your way or doing other things just to avoid being around people.
- Avoiding social situations whenever possible, especially ones where unfamiliar people are present.
- Staying at home more and more often just to avoid other people.

Dan's Story

Well, I've always been shy around other people. My parents tell me I was the quiet kid and I liked to be by myself. In my teens, I started to feel... uneasy around people I didn't know very well. I was sure they would notice me... and judge me.

Now I'm in Grade 12, and I hardly join in class discussions and I hate having to do class presentations. I try to avoid anything that could potentially draw attention to me. I even eat my lunch alone.

I don't know, I feel uncomfortable in social situations and I'm always worried I'll say something stupid. When I do talk to others, I feel, like, shaky and nauseous even though I know there's no reason to be nervous.

I just, I wish I could be more outgoing and not worry so much about what people think of me.

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Jim Carrey describes himself as being painfully shy as a child. He became the class clown in freshman year of high school as a way to deal with his shyness and make friends.*
- *Social anxiety is one of the most common types of anxiety challenges.*
- *Anxiety is often a private experience that others don't notice.*

don't wait to get help

Getting help for social anxiety issues means you're taking action so that you can make the most out of everyday life.

People who experience social anxiety may think they will never be comfortable around people they don't know very well. It can be hard to see past how you are feeling, but there is help available that can support a person in overcoming social anxiety.

If you are bothered by uncomfortable thoughts and feelings in social situations, we invite you to take our **social anxiety check**.



social anxiety can be overcome

Learning all you can about social anxiety will help you figure out what will work for you. mindcheck.ca offers confidential screening tools and support for dealing with social anxiety.

Check it out... Act now!

Information and resources: mindcheck.ca