

SHYNESS AND SOCIAL ANXIETY

What is Shyness?

Most people at some stage in their life experience some degree of shyness or social anxiety. This is normal. Shyness is a manageable emotion that most people experience when they are confronted with social situations in which they feel unsure or uncomfortable. For example, attending a party can be challenging for most people particularly if you do not know anyone there. Children who are shy usually grow out of this condition when they become teenagers or adults as their self esteem and confidence grows. Some adults can also experience shyness in some situations, but it does not stop them from participating in activities that they enjoy doing.

What is Social Anxiety?

Social Anxiety is an “extreme” form of shyness. Social Anxiety is almost always accompanied by physical symptoms of anxiety and generally results in avoidance behaviour. When shyness develops into social anxiety, interacting with people on all different levels can become very difficult, impacting on the person’s life in a severe and debilitating way. This can lead to social isolation.

Social Anxiety is a fear of being embarrassed, judged or evaluated negatively in social situations. The level of anxiety experienced by the person with Social Anxiety is generally excessive, and results in substantial impairment in a person’s social, interpersonal, emotional and occupational life. Social Anxiety Disorder is common in both men and women and is found across all cultural and linguistic groups. Social Anxiety normally develops by the mid teenage years. If left untreated, Social Anxiety can add to the onset of other conditions such as; depression, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, and sometimes suicide.

What are the main symptoms of Social Anxiety?

- High levels of anxiety when exposed to the feared situation (sweating, trembling, palpitations, tense muscles, dry throat, dizziness, and blushing are common symptoms);
- Feelings of self consciousness and inadequacy;
- Fear that others are scrutinizing or judging the person in a negative way;
- An overwhelming feeling of wanting to escape;
- Avoidance of the feared situation which can often lead to social isolation from family, friends and society;
- Reliance on drugs and alcohol to get the person through the feared situation.

Common situations which are feared by people who experience Social Anxiety

- Speaking in public
- Meeting new people
- Being criticised
- Using the telephone
- Being watched doing something

- Being the centre of attention
- Being teased
- Eating and drinking in public
- Writing in front of others

Professional Help

If you suffer from Social Anxiety, help is available to assist you to manage your condition much more effectively. Contact the Counselling Service on 8344 6927 to organise a confidential assessment of your situation by a counsellor. At times referrals are organised with external counsellors and psychotherapists for your ongoing treatment depending on your individual needs.