



SOCIAL ANXIETY

Before, During & After a Social Situation

A practical way to reduce avoidance, self-monitoring, and post-event overthinking.

Confidence often follows repeated participation. You do not have to wait to feel confident before taking a small social step.

Before

- 1 Pick one workable goal**
Use a behavior goal, not a feeling goal: "I will stay 20 minutes and ask one question," rather than "I must feel confident."
- 2 Expect some anxiety**
Make room for discomfort instead of waiting for it to disappear. Anxiety can come with you while you still participate.
- 3 Drop one safety behavior**
Choose one small experiment: less rehearsing, less phone-checking, softer perfectionism, or slightly more eye contact.

During

- 1 Turn attention outward**
Notice the room, the topic, or what the other person is actually saying instead of monitoring every facial expression or sentence you produce.
- 2 Use curiosity**
When your mind goes blank, ask a simple follow-up: "How did you get into that?" or "What was that like for you?"

After

- 1 Stop the mental replay**
Give yourself a short review window, then redirect. Ask: "What facts do I actually know?"
- 2 Count participation as success**
Success is practicing approach behavior, not performing perfectly or receiving universal approval.

Use this as a flexible guide, not a rule. If a skill increases distress or does not fit your situation, stop and choose a different approach. Bring questions or observations to therapy.

This handout is educational and is not a substitute for individualized mental health care, medical care, or emergency services. If you are in immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support.