

**One in five people have an emotional problem in any twelve month period...**

**People may have a Social Anxiety Disorder if they:**

- Strongly fear social or performance situations which involve unfamiliar people or where some judgment of their performance is involved. There is a fear that they will behave in a way that's embarrassing, humiliating or show their anxiety.
- Nearly always (or always) experiences anxiety in these situations. In some cases this involves a panic attack.
- Recognise the fear is unreasonable or excessive.
- Avoid the feared situations or experience them with intense anxiety or distress.
- Experience difficulties with any of the following: their normal routine, their ability to function at school or work, their relationships and social activities, feeling very distressed that they have this phobia.

**Based on well-tested principles of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). CBT has been widely shown to be the most effective treatment for reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression.**

**What to do...**

If you suffer from significant anxiety problems it is extremely important that you obtain treatment. This is both because of the major effect that anxiety can have on your life and also because anxiety does not go away easily unless you tackle it head-on. When you've had anxiety for a long time you may need to keep using anxiety management strategies from time to time over some years to help keep your anxiety at manageable levels.

Several types of treatments are available for people who suffer from Social Anxiety Disorder. These include medications and psychological treatments.

Click on the treatments below to find out more about what works for Social Anxiety Disorder. Each treatment has either 1, 2 or 3 smiley faces next to it. The more smiley faces, the more research evidence there is to support the treatment as useful. Those with the best evidence have 3 smiley faces next to them:

Cognitive Therapy (or **cognitive restructuring**) in Social Anxiety Disorder targets the person's interpretations and predictions about their anxiety, their social behaviour and others' reactions. The technique involves learning to recognise thoughts that contribute to social anxiety, to challenge these thoughts and to replace them with more realistic thoughts that reduce anxiety levels.

Cognitive therapy has been found to be effective when delivered face-to-face. In addition, a recent (unpublished) randomised controlled trial in Sweden points to the effectiveness of Internet interventions for social anxiety disorders. This trial was conducted online and included some therapist input.

A technique that is closely related to cognitive restructuring is **attention training**. This involves becoming more aware of where you are focusing your attention, and practicing turning that attention away from yourself and your own nervousness. In performance situations this can help you to focus more on the task at hand rather than your own anxiety. In social situations, it helps you to focus more on the person you're speaking to and concentrate better on the content of their conversation. Attention training has been found to reduce the fear of blushing in front of others.