

# what can be done about **social anxiety?**

If you have been affected by social anxiety, you might naturally be wondering what you can do about it. There are a number of different options that you may wish to consider. If you are looking for ways that you can start reducing your anxiety in social situations, be sure to talk to your doctor or a mental health practitioner for more information about these and other options available to you.

## **Medication**

Medication has been used to reduce anxiety symptoms in social situations. While there are a number of different medications that may help to reduce anxiety symptoms, it is often difficult to know which one will work the best. You should always speak to your doctor if you have any queries about medication, and if your doctor prescribes them, make sure you follow all the instructions, and report any side effects.

## **Cognitive-Behavioural Strategies**

Another option for reducing social anxiety is to use cognitive-behavioural strategies. These strategies involve addressing the three components that specifically contribute to anxiety in social situations. These components include thoughts, physical reactions and avoidance. In this way, cognitive-behavioural strategies seek to change the anxiety habits that may have developed in response to social situations.

### **Physical Reactions**

You may have felt a number of physical reactions in response to anxious social situations such as rapid breathing, pounding heart, sweating, clammy palms, and muscle



tension. To help the body restore itself to a calmer state and reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety you can use some relaxation techniques. Some people use yoga or meditation to help them relax. You can also use some simple calming techniques by slowing your breathing down. You'd be surprised how much changing our breathing can change how our bodies respond to anxiety!

### **Thoughts**

If you feel very anxious when it comes to social situations, you may find that your thinking influences how anxious you feel. For example, being concerned that people will think poorly of you, focussing on negative feedback, or worrying about future and past events, can all increase your anxiety levels.



By looking at these thoughts, or *cognitions*, and determining how you change unhelpful thoughts into more helpful thoughts, you can start to reduce the anxiety that you feel in social situations.

### **Behaviour**

One of the most important factors that needs to be addressed in social anxiety is the avoidance of social situations. The more you *don't* go into these situations, the more you'll believe that you *can't* go into them. That doesn't necessarily mean that you should take on your biggest fear straight away. There are ways to gently confront those situations one step at a time.