



Social Anxiety Course

Centre for Clinical Interventions

What is social anxiety?

Almost everyone gets a little anxious or embarrassed in front of other people now and then. For example, it is normal to feel anxious during public speaking. However, for people with social anxiety, social situations can lead to intense anxiety.

Often the person is worried that they will be embarrassed or humiliated in some way, and that they will be evaluated negatively or criticised by others. People with social anxiety might think things such as:

- ▶ *'I will make a fool of myself'*
- ▶ *'They will think I am stupid'*
- ▶ *'They can see how anxious I am'.*

People with social anxiety often report experiencing uncomfortable physical sensations during social situations (or even when thinking about social situations).

Common symptoms include:

- ▶ blushing
- ▶ sweating
- ▶ shaking
- ▶ stuttering.



These symptoms often trigger further anxiety, as the socially anxious person worries that others will notice these signs of anxiety and judge them negatively.

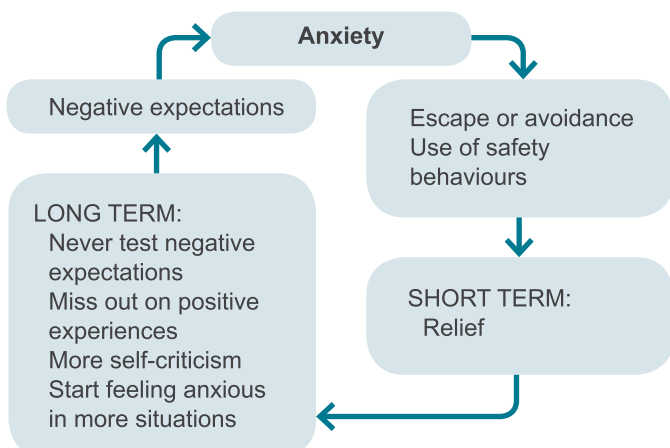
People with social anxiety tend to avoid social situations, or suffer through them in great distress. While avoidance can provide some immediate relief, in the long term it can lead to losing confidence in ourselves. It can also create big problems in our day to day life (e.g. falling behind in work or studies, not making important phone calls or attending appointments).

The degree and intensity of social anxiety can vary. Some people only experience social anxiety in specific situations (e.g. giving a presentation at work or talking to unfamiliar people). Other people may experience social anxiety in almost all social situations.

Social anxiety treatment at CCI

The CCI Social Anxiety Course is a structured group treatment focused on equipping you with practical skills and strategies to overcome social anxiety.

Our treatment uses cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT is based on the concept that our emotions and actions are largely influenced by our thoughts.



Research has shown that people tend to think unhelpful thoughts when they are feeling socially anxious. CBT can teach you techniques and strategies to modify these thoughts and behaviours so that you can better manage your social anxiety.

The CCI Social Anxiety Course includes:

- ▶ Education about social anxiety
- ▶ Cognitive therapy (identifying, questioning and changing unhelpful thoughts)
- ▶ Exposure therapy (devising a plan for gradually approaching feared situations)
- ▶ Attention training (being more able to take in what is happening around us)
- ▶ Developing a realistic self-image of how we appear to others when we are anxious.

Practical information

Each Social Anxiety Course runs for 12 weekly sessions of two hours, with a follow-up session four weeks after the last session.

All appointments take place during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm).

The Social Anxiety Course is held at our clinic in Northbridge. As CCI forms part of the public mental health system, the service we offer is free of charge.

Why group treatment?

Most people with social anxiety find the prospect of group treatment daunting. The Social Anxiety Course follows a set plan and therapists will have new information and skills to introduce each week. Group discussion is focused on the information and skills introduced during the course. It is up to you when and how much you contribute to group discussions.

We offer group therapy because research has shown it is effective. Group therapy allows the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other people who are working on similar problems.

After completing the Social Anxiety Course, many people report that they were initially nervous about attending the group, but ultimately found the group very supportive and helpful.

Referral

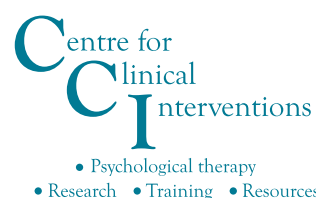
If you are interested in attending the Social Anxiety Course at CCI, please ask your GP or psychiatrist to refer you to our service. Our referral form is available on the CCI website: www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

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