

# **SOCIAL ANXIETY AND PHOBIAS**

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Thirty-five million people suffer from social anxiety also known as social phobia. Social anxiety or phobia is an overwhelming fear of embarrassment in any type of public situation. People who suffer from this problem have a phobia about what others think about them. They also fear calling attention to themselves in any type of social situation. Social anxiety and phobia is one of the most prevalent problems facing those individuals who consider themselves shy and would rather remain in the background. According to the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, "the key element of social anxiety is extreme anxiety about being judged by others or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment or ridicule." It can begin as early as six or seven and last a lifetime. Anxiety, shyness and fear are rooted deeply in the amygdala, an intricate part of the limbic system, the brain's emotional response center. The amygdala records and stores all negative experiences and then directs the body's response – a racing heart, elevated blood pressure or panic. Fear is the major emotion that causes an over production of adrenaline in the brain. When adrenaline floods the bloodstream physical symptoms such as a pounding heart, flushed face, nausea, dry mouth and diarrhea can cause you to feel a loss of control. This is followed by a panic attack, then total withdrawal. Fear of rejection from peers as well as loved ones is the number one concern. Fear of failure and embarrassment is also a major factor.

Subsequently, those who suffer try to avoid social interaction altogether and become anxious when forced to interact with others in any type of school, work or social function.

Generalized social anxiety and phobia is the inherited form of the problem occurring frequently among first degree relatives according to M.B. Stein, M.D. His research in

*Neurological Perspectives on Social Phobias* shows a hereditary component such as predisposition to shyness or anxiety. This is believed to provide a firm foundation on which environmental factors and life experiences build to produce generalized social phobias.

Social anxiety and phobia can become so severe it controls a person's life inhibiting academic, professional and personal growth. In many cases a person may have a very high I.Q. but their intense fear of failure or rejection will hold them back. People who suffer from social anxiety and phobia have trouble establishing, developing and maintaining personal relationships. They tend to withdraw and are intimidated by the opposite sex fearing rejection. The disorder is slightly more prevalent among women than men. Women tend to be more shy and withhold disagreement and disapproval. In some cases women who have had a traumatic childhood experience involving public activities will fear a recurrence of panic and go into avoidance. The theory that those with social phobias and anxiety have a somewhat altered brain structure as compared to normal controls. The brain chemistry is definitely out of sync with the over production of excitatory neurotransmitters and a deficiency of inhibitory neurotransmitters. There is some biological evidence that supports those with social phobia have an altered brain structure as compared to normal controls. In all cases those with social anxiety and phobia have a low serotonin level and an overactive limbic system that be controlled by the amino acids GABA, glutamine, glycine and 5HTP. Many physicians will prescribe SSRI's such as Paxil, Prozac or Serzone but this is only using band-aid therapy. Drugs only block the symptoms. As soon as you stop them the anxiety and panic will return. The deficiency in the brain must be addressed by using needed amino acids to create

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neurotransmitters. In some cases those who suffer will use alcohol but this will only compound the problem and increase the deficiencies in the brain. Neurotransmitter deficiencies must be addressed and needed amino acids taken. Children six to ten who display social anxiety as well as separation anxiety should be given a balanced neurotransmitter complex such as Brain Link once or twice daily, depending on their weight. Liquid Serotonin, an important neurotransmitter, is also very helpful and can be used on an as needed basis. At bedtime children should be given one HTP10 and liquid calcium and magnesium. HTP10 is a neurotransmitter formula that elevates the serotonin level.

The Adult Program should include a Balanced Neurotransmitter, either **Brain Link** or **BNC**.

**Mood Sync** morning and evening. **GABA 375** for any event which causes increased anxiety. If anxiety is a major problem use **Anxiety Control** during the day and **Mood Sync** at bedtime. GABA is the most prevalent inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain. GABA has a specific role in brain function. It controls and regulates how fast the brain receives anxiety messages. Serotonin is also of major importance in controlling anxiety as well as depression. Bringing the brain chemistry into balance using amino acids will make a major difference and the fear will not overwhelm you. If you feel your problem is controlling you see a behavior therapist. Psychotherapy is an excellent adjunct to the orthomolecular therapy. Learn to relax and breathe your way through anxious situations, especially if you tend to hyperventilate when you become anxious. Deep breathing can help regulate the release of adrenalin, thus slowing down feelings of anxiety and panic. Social anxiety and phobia is a treatable problem and in time with therapy you will see a positive difference. The real test of improvement comes during stressful or anxious times especially social situations. Each time you are able to progress past your fear, your anxiety will diminish and your confidence will increase.

Getting better takes time and commitment. Anxiety and phobias don't just happen overnight. So don't look for a magic bullet to take it away overnight. It is important to set small goals and work to achieve them. Your fear and anxiety won't go away without an effort on your part to take control of your life. Knowledge is power, so educate and inform yourself about your problem so you can help yourself. Each day you will feel a little bit better and more secure.

Do not let your brain become deficient in neurotransmitters and serotonin – nourish it. The brain is the busiest, yet the most undernourished organ in the body. Remember, whatever the brain tells the body to do – it will do. Never let anyone tell you the answer is drugs. You were NOT born with drugs in your brain so how can you be deficient. For more in-depth information on fear and phobias read my books *The Anxiety Epidemic* and *GABA, the Anxiety Amino Acid*. Take one day at a time and let your healing begin.

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