
FEUP
Healthy Minds

You deserve it



Contacts

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Psychological support by appointment:

Mondays to Fridays, from 9:30 to 15:30

ORIENTATION AND INTEGRATION OFFICE

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Social Anxiety



Social Anxiety (or social phobia) is characterized by an **intense fear of social interactions that persists and affects daily life.**

It includes feelings of **humiliation** or **embarrassment** in front of others and the need to "**look good**" because **you believe you are not "as good"** as them or **that you may be judged and/or criticized.**

Symptoms of Social Anxiety can include...

- **Preoccupation** with everyday activities such as **meeting new people, starting conversations, talking on the phone, going to class,...;**
- **Avoiding or worrying a lot about social activities** (parties, group conversations, eating with others);
- **Always thinking about doing something embarrassing** (blushing, sweating, appearing incompetent);
- **Difficulty performing activities that others are watching;**
- **Frequent physical reactions to the anticipation or moment of social interaction** (trembling, racing heart, shortness of breath, dry throat and mouth...) or, in extreme cases, **panic attacks.**

It is common to experience some of these symptoms alone and/or circumstantially.

However, if you identify these symptoms in yourself in a persistent (6 or more months) or aggravated way, it is likely that they are significantly affecting your functioning (academic, professional, social,...) and you may need help!

What keeps Social Anxiety

- *Negative past experiences* with social situations that lead to *beliefs of "not being good enough"*
- *Avoidance of social situations* (e.g. talking only to a friend, avoiding eye contact)
- *Maintaining a negative and painful self-image*
- *Fear of fear:* anticipating that you will feel anxious in the face of social interaction and, through anticipation, the symptoms actually end up happening
- *Focusing inwards* during an interaction, noticing strong bodily reactions, self-criticizing and paying less attention to what is happening outside and in the interaction.

What you can do

- **Write about what's going on inside you** before, during and after the situation;
- **Remember that thoughts are not facts** and the worst-case social scenarios you put in your mind are unlikely to become reality;
- **Keep questioning your beliefs:** are you jumping to conclusions, catastrophizing or generalizing about what others think about you?
- **Choose kinder thoughts about yourself** and direct your **attention to the people and environment around you;**
- **Identify your avoidance behaviors** and confront them;
- **Identify physical symptoms of anxiety** and apply relaxation strategies;
- **Create connections** and maintain supportive relationships;
- **Seek professional help when it becomes difficult to cope with Social Anxiety on your own. A psychologist can help you find the most appropriate solutions to your problem situation.**