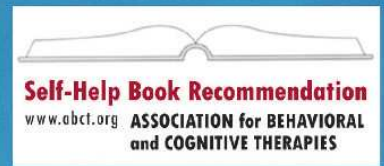


A NEW HARBINGER SELF-HELP WORKBOOK



# The Shyness & Social Anxiety WORKBOOK

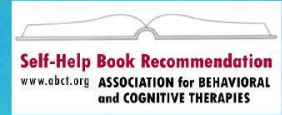
THIRD EDITION

PROVEN, STEP-BY-STEP TECHNIQUES  
FOR OVERCOMING YOUR FEAR

MARTIN M. ANTONY, PhD  
RICHARD P. SWINSON, MD

— MORE THAN 75,000 COPIES SOLD —

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*“Antony and Swinson bring their combined expertise to bear in helping readers understand and reduce their social anxiety. In covering social anxiety from A-Z, they include state-of-the-art information and research-proven strategies for overcoming this often-debilitating problem. This is the first workbook I recommend to my patients with social anxiety—its clear and powerful recommendations can help you get more out of life!”*

—**Jonathan S. Abramowitz, PhD**, director of the University of North Carolina Anxiety and Stress Disorders Program

*“Social anxiety and shyness can become so intense that they prevent people from enjoying life. This book is ideal for anyone who wants to learn to be more comfortable around other people. Antony and Swinson have taken proven treatments for social anxiety and adapted them for a nonprofessional audience. The step-by-step strategies described in this book have been shown to be effective, are easy to understand, and are sure to help the reader cope better in social situations. Anyone who experiences significant anxiety when performing or when interacting with other people should read this book!”*

—**Aaron T. Beck, MD**, professor emeritus of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania

*“This is an excellent resource written by skilled, world-renowned clinicians and researchers in the area of anxiety disorders. Antony and Swinson present the most up-to-date information about social anxiety and its treatment in a way that is clear and, most importantly, that provides step-by-step tools for overcoming this disorder. This is a must-read for persons suffering with social anxiety.”*

—**Michelle G. Craske, PhD**, professor of psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles

*“If you have trouble with social anxiety, you will find this book by Antony and Swinson to be an excellent resource. This highly experienced duo has provided an excellent road map to guide you through your efforts to overcome your anxiety and improve the quality of your life. Based on the tried-and-true methods of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and on the results of many scientific studies, the techniques described in this book will help you feel better when you are with other people or the center of attention. The only thing you have to do is work hard and apply them. Best wishes for your journey along that road.”*

—**Richard Heimberg, PhD**, Thaddeus L. Bolton Professor of Psychology, and director of the Adult Anxiety Clinic of Temple University

*“This volume, written by a team composed of a psychologist and a psychiatrist, is an outstanding workbook for any individual suffering from social anxiety or shyness and wishing to undertake a structured self-help program to overcome it. The book can be used alone or in conjunction with therapy. The authors are experts in their field and they offer strategies that are solidly grounded in the latest research literature. The workbook format provides readers with the exercises and worksheets they need to do the difficult work required to overcome their shyness and social anxiety.”*

—**Jacqueline B. Persons, PhD**, director of the Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Science Center in Oakland, CA, and clinical professor in the department of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley

*“This workbook by Antony and Swinson gives the millions of people whose lives are limited by social fears the hope to control their future. The book is clear, practical, easy to follow, and, above all, based on solid, scientific ground. The sections on troubleshooting are especially valuable to really help fine tune the techniques. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who is serious about overcoming their social fears.”*

—**Ronald M. Rapee, PhD**, distinguished professor of psychology at the Centre for Emotional Health, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

*“Antony and Swinson provide practical advice in a highly readable format. This book will be invaluable to people whose social anxiety prevents them from leading full and happy lives.”*

—**Murray B. Stein, MD**, professor of psychiatry, and director of the Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Disorders Research Program at the University of California, San Diego

*“If you know you are paying a price by shying away from social encounters, then you don’t have to wait until you are ‘ready’ to step out into the world. Let this book help you get ready. As you absorb the many insights within these pages, this plan will make such impressive sense that you’ll feel your confidence grow. If you are like my clients who apply these clear tactics, you’ll soon reap the benefits of your courageous actions.”*

—**Reid Wilson, PhD**, author of *Stopping the Noise in Your Head*

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This book is dedicated to our grandchildren.

For Parker Power

—MMA

For Maggie and Matthew Cummings and Lucy Swinson

—RPSContents

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—MARTIN M. ANTONY, PHDRICHARD SWINSON, MDTORONTO, CANADA

# Introduction

Shyness and social anxiety are universal. Almost everyone has felt nervous speaking in front of a group or awkward when interacting with another person. We wonder if a presentation went well or whether we made a good impression on a first date or during a job interview. Even some celebrities, who make their living in the public eye, have been described (often by themselves) as being excessively shy in certain situations or at particular points in their lives. Here is a partial list (for more details, check out <http://www.shakeyourshyness.com/shypeople.htm>):

David Bowie (musician)  
Mary Chapin Carpenter (musician)  
Harrison Ford (actor)  
Kim Kardashian (television personality)  
Nicole Kidman (actor)  
Lady Gaga (musician)  
David Letterman (talk-show host)  
Abraham Lincoln (American president)  
Michelle Pfeiffer (actor)  
Brad Pitt (actor)  
J. K. Rowling (author)  
Kristen Stewart (actor)

Barbra Streisand, Carly Simon, and Donny Osmond have all spoken openly about their struggles with anxiety and how it affected their ability to perform musically. In fact, Donny Osmond served as an honorary member of the board of directors of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, saying “I’ve talked with so many people who were unwilling to do anything about their anxiety disorder because they were too embarrassed. I want to let people know that they are not alone and that help is available”

<https://www.adaa.org/donny-osmond>). Even radio personality Howard Stern has described himself as being painfully shy when he is outside the safe confines of his on-air studio.

Shyness and social anxiety can range in intensity, from very mild to completely incapacitating. In extreme cases, they may prevent an individual from developing friendships, working, or even standing in a public place. Regardless of whether your fears are minor or completely overwhelming, the strategies described in this book are designed to help you deal more effectively with shyness and social anxiety.

We recommend that you read the chapters in this workbook in order. The initial chapters are designed to educate you about the nature of shyness and social anxiety and to teach you how to evaluate the main features of your own personal form of them. Then we discuss the costs and benefits of different treatment approaches and help you to select from among the many that are available. Subsequent chapters provide detailed information about different treatment strategies, including medications, cognitive strategies for changing anxiety-provoking thoughts, exposure strategies for confronting the situations you fear, mindfulness and acceptance-based strategies to change the way you relate to your feelings and thoughts, and strategies for fine-tuning your communication and performance skills. The final chapter discusses strategies for maintaining the improvements you've made.

This book is different from other self-help books in a number of ways. Of the many books on social anxiety and shyness that you will find online or in your local bookstore, this is one of the few written in a workbook format. It is filled with exercises and practices designed to teach you basic strategies for overcoming shyness and social anxiety. We encourage you to fill in the blank worksheets and forms found throughout the text. In addition, we invite you to download copies for your personal use so you can continue to use them over the coming months. These downloadable forms are available at this

book's website: <http://www.newharbinger.com/33407>. (See the very back of this book for more details.)

This book also differs from others in that the strategies we recommend have all been investigated extensively in well-designed clinical studies. In addition to specializing in helping people deal more effectively with their shyness and social anxiety, we also are actively involved in research on the nature and treatment of anxiety. It is well established that when people use the techniques described in this book in a therapeutic setting, they generally experience a significant decrease in social and performance anxiety (Weeks 2014). Essentially, we took strategies that have proven useful in therapy and adapted them for the self-help format. However, you don't need a therapist to administer the strategies; research has shown that our self-help approach (based on the previous edition of this book) can effectively reduce shyness and social anxiety (Abramowitz et al. 2009). This workbook is designed to be used alone or coupled with regular visits to a professional therapist. In fact, having a good reference that our own clients and patients can use as they progress through therapy was a motivation for us to write this book.

We thoroughly updated this third edition with the latest scientific knowledge and references concerning the nature and treatment of shyness and social anxiety. For example, we added a new section on the role of hormones, such as cortisol and oxytocin, to chapter 2 to reflect recent developments in our understanding of their possible involvement in shyness and social anxiety. We also revised chapter 5 to include the latest information on medications, including new antidepressants, anticonvulsants, and antipsychotics, which have recently been studied for treating social anxiety. We clarified the information in some sections and completely rewrote those that were out-of-date, adding many new examples and illustrations. Chapter 9, on mindfulness and acceptance-based strategies, is brand-new to this edition as well. Finally, we entirely updated the resources at the end of the book.

Your journey to overcoming shyness and social anxiety may not be easy. You will overcome some aspects of your fear more easily and quickly than others. Also, for every two or three steps forward, you may experience what feels like a step back. Nevertheless, research has shown that most people will experience a reduction in their social and performance fears if they consistently use the techniques described in this book. With hard work and perseverance, these techniques will provide you with the opportunity to make big, positive changes in your life.

PART 1

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SOCIAL ANXIETY

## Chapter 1

# What Are Shyness and Social Anxiety?

Hanna was a twenty-six-year-old woman who worked as an assistant manager of a small bookstore. She was referred to our Anxiety Treatment and Research Clinic to get help for intense anxiety about her upcoming wedding. Hanna wasn't afraid of being married; in fact, she looked forward to spending years together with her husband. She was terrified of the wedding itself. The idea of being on display in front of such a large audience was almost unthinkable. In fact, she had postponed her wedding twice before because of her fear of being the center of attention.

Hanna's anxiety involved more than just a fear of her wedding. She reported that she'd always been shy, even when she was very young. When she was in high school, her anxiety around people became so intense that it affected her school life. She was convinced that her classmates would find her dull or boring, or that they would notice her anxiety and assume that she was incompetent. Typically, Hanna avoided doing oral reports at school and didn't take any classes in which she felt her classmates might observe or judge her performance (such as physical education). On a few occasions, she even asked for special permission to hand in a written essay instead of doing a presentation in front of the class. Despite being an excellent student, she tended to be very quiet in class, rarely asking questions or participating in discussions.

Throughout college, Hanna found it difficult to make new friends. Although people enjoyed her company and often invited her to parties and other social events, she rarely accepted the invitations, preferring to keep in touch through texting and social media. She had a long list of excuses to get out of socializing. She was comfortable with only her family and a few



longtime friends, and aside from them she usually avoided contact with other people.

After college, Hanna began working at a bank, and after a short time she was promoted to assistant manager. She was always comfortable dealing with customers, and she gradually became more comfortable talking to coworkers. However, she avoided eating lunch with colleagues, and she never attended any social events, including the bank's annual holiday party.

Hanna lived with her social anxiety for years, despite how it interfered with her education, work, and social life. It wasn't until the anxiety prevented her from having the kind of wedding she and her fiancé wanted that she decided to seek help.

Hanna's story is not that different from those of other people who experience intense feelings of shyness, social anxiety, and performance-related fears. The types of anxious beliefs and behaviors that she reported are similar to those that many socially anxious people describe. After her evaluation at our clinic, Hanna began a twelve-session course of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and gradually learned to cope with her anxiety more effectively. By the end of treatment, her avoidance of social situations had decreased significantly, and Hanna was much more comfortable in situations that previously made her very anxious.

CBT involves (1) identifying the thought patterns and behaviors that contribute to negative feelings, such as anxiety, and (2) teaching people new ways of thinking and behaving to better manage their anxiety. This book will teach you the CBT strategies commonly used to treat social anxiety. Before exploring them, however, we will begin this chapter in the same way we usually begin treatment with the individuals we see in our program—by offering an overview of the nature of fear and anxiety, in general, and of social anxiety, in particular.

## **Anxiety, Worry, Fear, and Panic**

Everyone knows what it feels like to be afraid. Fear is a basic human emotion. In humans, fear is controlled, in part, by an area of the brain called the limbic system. This system includes some of the deepest, most primitive structures of the brain—structures shared by many less “evolved” animals. In fact, there is reason to believe that the emotion of fear is present across most, if not all, animal species. Most organisms display specific patterns of behavior when confronted with danger, and often these “fearful” behaviors include forms of aggression or escape. Therefore, the intense feelings we experience when we are exposed to an immediate danger often are referred to as the fight-or-flight response.

Although most people use the terms “anxiety” and “fear” interchangeably, behavioral scientists who study emotions assign somewhat different meanings to these and other related terms (Barlow 2002; Suárez et al. 2009). *Anxiety* is a future-oriented feeling of dread or apprehension associated with the sense that events are both uncontrollable and unpredictable. In other words, anxiety is a nagging feeling that occurs when a person believes a negative event may occur in the future and nothing can be done to prevent it.

People who feel anxious tend to dwell upon and ruminate about the possibility of danger. This tendency to dwell on future negative events is called *worry*. Anxiety is also associated with uncomfortable physical feelings, such as arousal (for example, sweatiness, increased pulse), tension (for instance, tight muscles), and pain (such as headaches).

There is no question that when anxiety is too intense it can interfere with performance; however, mild to moderate amounts of anxiety are actually helpful. If you never became even slightly anxious under any circumstance, you probably wouldn’t bother doing the things that must be done. Why

would you bother preparing an assignment on time, dressing nicely for a date, or eating healthy food if you weren't concerned about the consequences of not doing these things? In part, it is anxiety that motivates us to work hard, prepares us for challenges, and protects us from possible threats.

In contrast to anxiety, *fear* is a basic emotion that occurs when an individual is confronted with an immediate real or imagined danger. Fear leads to a sudden, intense physiological alarm reaction that essentially has one purpose: to get the person away from the danger as quickly as possible. When people feel fearful, their bodies go into overdrive to ensure that escape is fast and successful. Heart rate and blood pressure increase to transfer blood to the large muscles. Breathing quickens to improve the flow of oxygen throughout the body. People sweat to cool off the body and perform more efficiently. In fact, all of these symptoms of arousal and fear are designed to make escape easier, allowing for survival in the face of danger.

*Panic attack* is the clinical term used to describe intense fear that occurs even though no realistic danger is actually present. Panic attacks can be triggered by specific situations that people fear (for example, giving an oral presentation, being in a high place, seeing a snake), and sometimes they occur out of the blue, without any obvious trigger. We discuss panic attacks in more detail later in this chapter.

To summarize, fear is an emotional reaction to an immediate danger, whereas anxiety is a state of apprehension about some future threat. For example, worrying about giving a presentation that is a week away is anxiety, whereas experiencing an adrenaline rush while in the midst of giving a presentation is more likely fear.

Here are a few points to remember:

Anxiety and fear are normal emotions everyone experiences from time to time.

Anxiety and fear are time limited. Even though they feel as though they may continue forever, their effects always decrease over time.

Anxiety and fear have a helpful function in that they prepare you for future threats and protect you from danger. So, your goal should not be to rid yourself of *all* fear and anxiety. Rather, your goal should be to reduce your anxiety to a level that no longer interferes significantly with your life.

## **What Is a Social Situation?**

A *social situation* is any situation involving you and at least one other person. Social situations can involve interacting with others (these are often referred to as *interpersonal situations*) or can involve you being the focus of attention or being noticed by others (these are often called *performance situations*). Here are some examples of interpersonal and performance situations that people with high levels of social anxiety may fear:

## **Interpersonal Situations**

- Asking someone out on a date
- Talking to someone in authority
- Initiating or maintaining a conversation
- Going to a party
- Playing an interactive game online
- Having friends over for dinner
- Meeting new people
- Talking on the telephone
- Sending a text or an e-mail