

HOW TO OVERCOME SOCIAL ANXIETY

By Piercarla Garusi, Life Coach & NLP Practitioner

I worked with a client who had suffered from social anxiety for most of her life. She grew up in a dysfunctional family who emotionally abused her, and she arrived at the point of believing that there was something wrong with being her.

And this is a key to social anxiety: believing that there is something wrong or bad in you or with being you.

You might have been bullied or had abusive experiences which led you to believe this; but the truth is that there is NOTHING, I repeat, NOTHING wrong with you or being you: you are just a wonder.

Then I hear you saying: but I have suffered from social anxiety for many years of my life, there must be something wrong with me! Absolutely not.

And also I hear you saying: 'But I HAVE social anxiety, I need to solve it.' Well, you do not need to 'be fixed' or to solve social anxiety; please do not identify yourself with social anxiety, it is NOT you. If we identify ourselves with it, it is more difficult to make changes.

In fact, what is social anxiety? It is simply caused by non-resourceful patterns of thoughts and behaviours; do not identify yourself with it, it is NOT you; your natural condition is a condition of wellbeing, inner comfort and happiness and you are going to feel that again.

And also it is SO Important that you stop beating yourself up! Please, please, please forgive yourself! If you beat yourself up for the way you are, or the way you have behaved, the only result you obtain is to feel worse and to strengthen those negative patterns that create anxiety. In fact, how about asking yourself, 'How can I feel good about myself, if I keep beating myself up and thus feeling bad?' And so, if you behave in a way you do not like, take responsibility for it, learn from it, apologize if you need to, and forgive yourself.

Then there might be the pressure from society that, if you want to be accepted, you need to be, or behave in, a certain way. I have worked with clients who came to coaching as they arrived at some point in their lives, hit some pain and realised that what they had followed as happiness was simply an illusion. One said, 'I have followed the trends in society for my entire life and I have lost myself,' and another said, 'what I thought was bringing me happiness has instead created a hole within me, and I feel I have wasted my life'.

So, as you can see, following the trends does not quite work. So ask yourself, 'Do I prefer to be accepted or to be happy?'

I know you are going to tell me, 'But I am afraid of what people think, and this is what causes my social anxiety'. I know, but you can stop those thoughts that create that anxious feeling inside you and you can decide what you are going to think about people and about yourself.

How about if you thought that what other people think is simply their business, not yours? Would you feel relieved?

And I know you are thinking. 'But I cannot stop those thoughts that create anxiety, it seems they have more power than me'. I know, but this is only a conditioning of society. Let me ask you a question: Who is the master of your mind? Who controls your thoughts? You do. Start by simply saying: 'Stop' to the unwanted thoughts, and then 'This is what I want to think, NOW'. And you will see that you will, little by little, feel more in control.

Then to overcome social anxiety you need to be yourself and the person you really are- your soul- and love that.

You can be whoever you want to be, free from the conditioning of the society and from the conditioning you have experienced in your past.

As **Henry Kissinger** said, *'Accept everything about yourself - I mean everything. You are you and that is the beginning and the end - no apologies, no regrets.'*

Then you need to develop a relationship with yourself and make that relationship **THE MOST IMPORTANT** in your life.

You need to welcome yourself fully, appreciate and give value to yourself and be proud of yourself.

You need to establish your codes of conduct and values, and stick to them. You establish your own rules; you decide who you are and how you behave. Think that every person is different and chooses his/her own set of rules. And so, if you decide who you are and how you behave, your insecurity disappears, as it has no reason to exist anymore!

Then you need to like yourself. Do not look for appreciation outside you, it would make you weak; if that does not come, how are you going to feel? But if you like yourself, even if some people don't like you, that's normal; does it really matter?

Then you need to listen to yourself and start doing what makes you happy; ask yourself questions such as:

-what do I want?

-what would make me happy?

-what do I like?

And you need to treat yourself lovingly. For this you need to establish some criteria that support the relationship with yourself; i.e. if something happens, ask yourself:

*-is this good for me?
-is this right for me?
-does this make me happy?*

And so you can choose.

And please, please, please treat yourself well. You are the most precious thing you have got, and I mean extremely precious. Cherish yourself.

Treat yourself as your dearest friend, live your life from what makes you happy and you will be happy, and social anxiety will be only a memory of the past.

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