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The Little Black Book of Billionaire Secrets

# 13 Things About Social Anxiety Disorder You May Not Have Known



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SAD is the third most common psychological problem (after depression and alcohol dependence)

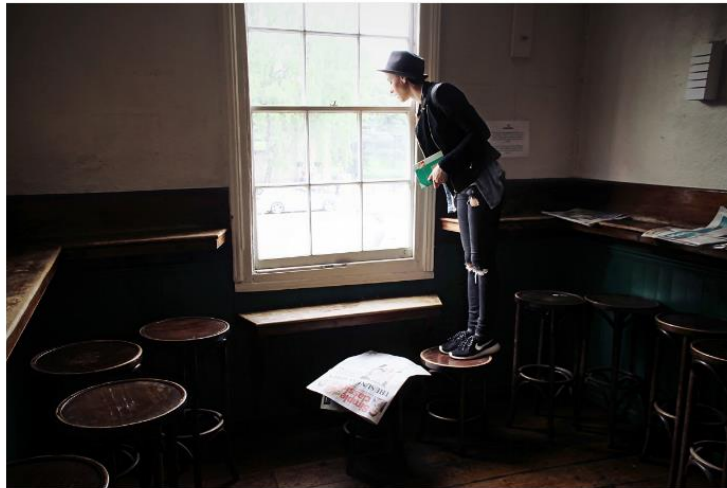


Image Credit: Unsplash.com, Toa Heftiba

## 1. You have more control over it than you may think

Using mindfulness, you can begin to notice what happens in the body when anxiety is present and develop strategies to empower clients to “signal safety” to their nervous system. Over time, those that practice mindfulness start to feel empowered to slow down their response to triggers, manage their body’s fear response (fight or flight) and increase their ability to tolerate discomfort. The more these neural pathways are used, the stronger they become. You experience this as feeling like you have a choice about how you will respond to a trigger.

A way to understand how the body and nervous system is central is to think of a movie scene where a group of people are together, perhaps at a small party on a sunny day, enjoying conversation, smiling, etc. In one version of this scene, happy music is playing, perhaps to suggest a romantic comedy. As viewers, we might anticipate that two of these party-goers are going to start a romance. Now imagine the same scene. Only, this time, the soundtrack is dark and ominous. Now, as viewers, we are now anticipating that one of the party-goers is about to go on a violent rampage.

Our nervous system is like the soundtrack for every scene in life that we encounter. It is all but impossible to experience a scene as safe and happy when the music tells us otherwise. With a mindful, body-based approach, clients can learn to change their music.

— Karen J. Helfrich, LCSW-C, Psychotherapist



## 2. Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is different from awkwardness

“ Social anxiety represents a large component of the anxiety disorders and really refers to when a person doesn't feel comfortable when they are in situations that require them to be social— school, work, public etc. It is more clearly defined as an excessive and unreasonable fear, which most people, who are just awkward or uncomfortable in those social situations wouldn't understand.

— Dr. Lisa Strohman, licensed clinical psychologist, founder and director of [Technology Wellness Center](#)

## 3. You are not alone

“ SAD is the third most common psychological problem (after depression and alcohol dependence) , and affects about 5-7% of the U.S. population annually. About 15 million Americans suffer from SAD. During a person's lifetime, there is up to a 13% chance of developing SAD. It usually begins in childhood or adolescence, but can develop in adulthood.

— Dr. Steve Orma, CBT clinical psychologist specializing in insomnia and anxiety

## 4. The biological information (DNA, genes, and temper) may contribute to developing social anxiety.

“ The genetic traits that are inherited from the parents and other relatives can influence the way in which the brain feels and regulates anxiety, shyness, nerves and stress.

— Diomira Guerrero, occupational therapist at DrFelix

## 5. Social anxiety can impact teenagers.

“ Younger people tend to have issues related to what is called 'imaginary audience' thinking that everyone is looking at them or watching them.

— Dr. Lisa Strohman, licensed clinical psychologist, founder and director of [Technology Wellness Center](#)

## 6. Life events and experiences can trigger social anxiety.

“ If people who are born with a cautious nature have stressful experiences, they can become more cautious and timid. People who receive constant criticism start to expect others to judge them in this light and thus tend to avoid contact with others to reduce the risk of this.

— Diomira Guerrero, occupational therapist at DrFelix

## 7. It's different from introversion.

“ Introverts may choose not to go to social situations or large group gatherings because they are de-energized by groups and recharged by "me time" or intimate one-on-one interactions. It's also different from being shy or quiet.

People with social anxiety may over-analyze and replay on loop in your mind any interactions you have with others, down to the finest details. And you see everything you do or don't do as bad. Like, "I touched my hair as I talked to her, she will think I'm so nervous... I'm so stupid and nobody will ever like me."

— Dr Perpetua Neo, Clinical Psychologist

## 8. Drugs mask the anxiety reaction.

“ Most of the medications that are prescribed are anti-anxiety medications that are either antidepressants or are in the benzodiazepine grouping, which only reduces the reaction to the situation rather than trying to stop the reaction from occurring.

— Dr. Lisa Strohman, licensed clinical psychologist, founder and director of [Technology Wellness Center](#)

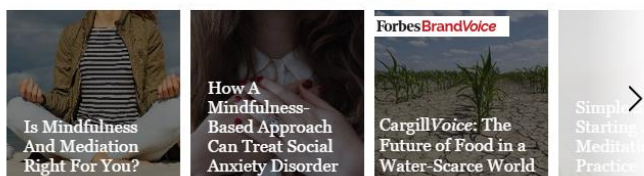
## 9. Shift your thoughts with mindfulness.

“ A study from the [Department of Psychology at Stanford University](#) showed that training in mindfulness and meditation helped people with anxiety disorder, by allowing them to quickly shift negative views of themselves to more positive ones, and as a consequence reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety.

— Maria Bruce, LMHC, NCC



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## 10. Social anxiety disorder is treatable.

“ Cognitive behavioral therapy(CBT) is one of the most well documented and researched approaches for treating social anxiety. It works on both the cognitive areas impacting the anxiety (how the person is thinking about the feared situation(s)) as well as looking at how they are behaving or reacting to those situations that may make the situation worse.

– Dr. Lisa Strohman, licensed clinical psychologist, founder and director of [Technology Wellness Center](#).

### 11. Contrary to what one might think, most people with social anxiety want to be social.

“ This is why seeking treatment is incredibly important. The desire may be there to spend time with friends, attend functions or events or share skills and talents, but social anxiety may serve as a road block.

– [Dr. Chester Goad](#), university administrator and graduate instructor

### 12. In cognitive behavioral therapy, you learn to observe and work with the negative thought cycles

“ CBT shines a light on the vicious cycles among our thoughts, feelings and behaviors, so we learn to break them and create more positive cycles. These cycles are often on autopilot (e.g. I walk into a room full of people -> my heart accelerates -> my palms get sweaty -> I think people notice me and laugh at me -> I clam up and stammer -> I think I sound stupid -> I over-analyze obsessively after the event and sleep poorly -> I feel like crap and never want to socialize again), and CBT helps to make the thoughts look less overwhelming and more concrete.

– [Dr Perpetua Neo](#), Clinical Psychologist

### 13. Meditation also helps.

“ There was a [Harvard study](#) that looked at people with SAD and after having two months of meditation training, the result showed that participants were less anxious and thought of themselves more positively after being trained in mindfulness. The study demonstrated that instead of being overly critical of themselves (like many people with social anxiety disorder do) they were able to shift focus to more positive self concept than before.

– [Dr. Lisa Strohman](#), licensed clinical psychologist, founder and director of [Technology Wellness Center](#)

*Jeena lead workshops on mindfulness, meditation, work-life integration, mental wellbeing and resiliency. She's the co-author of [The Anxious Lawyer](#). Follow her on Twitter: [@jeena\\_cho](#)*



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[PAGE 2 / 2](#)

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