



# DO YOU HAVE SOCIAL ANXIETY?

*Getting nervous in social situations limits your ability to make friends and expand your network. Find out how to cope with what could be a limiting condition – especially during the holidays*

Read each statement carefully and indicate which option applies best to you and your feelings, attitudes, behaviours and life in general. After finishing the test, you can sum up your points using the scoring table and view the relevant results for you.

**1. I become nervous and/or agitated when I meet someone for the first time.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false

**2. I feel paralysed and/or speechless when someone I don't know starts talking to me.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false

**3. I blush frequently when talking to others.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false

**4. If most people are already seated in a room, I'm highly reluctant to enter it.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false

**5. I become distressed that people might hear my voice tremble when speaking in front of a group.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false

**6. I go to great lengths to avoid social gatherings.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false

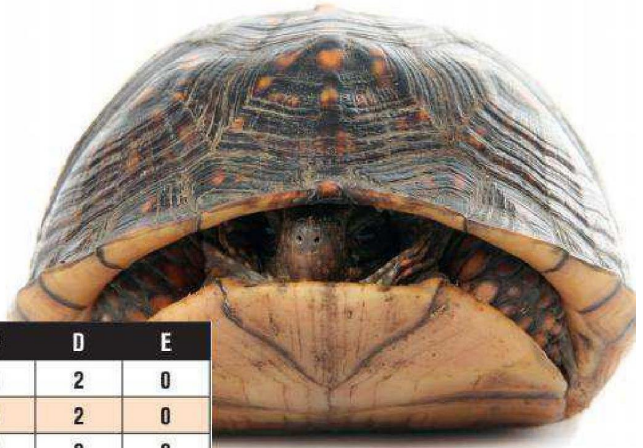
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false

**7. Having to endure social situations causes me an intense amount of stress.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false

**8. My fear of group activities causes problems in my relationships.**

- A Completely true
- B Mostly true
- C Somewhat true/false
- D Mostly false
- E Completely false



## SCORING YOURSELF

**9. My life has been disrupted or negatively impacted because of my anxiety in social situations.**

- A** Completely true
- B** Mostly true
- C** Somewhat true/false
- D** Mostly false
- E** Completely false

**10. I feel that my fear of social contact is excessive.**

- A** Completely true
- B** Mostly true
- C** Somewhat true/false
- D** Mostly false
- E** Completely false

QUESTION	A	B	C	D	E
1	10	8	5	2	0
2	10	8	5	2	0
3	10	8	5	2	0
4	10	8	5	2	0
5	10	8	5	2	0
6	10	8	5	2	0
7	10	8	5	2	0
8	10	8	5	2	0
9	10	8	5	2	0
10	10	8	5	2	0

### 0-30

You display few, if any, worrisome symptoms of social anxiety. Even if you do get a little nervous interacting with people, your discomfort is unlikely to be excessive. Overall, you can generally navigate most social interactions quite well. The key factor to remember when it comes to socialising is that practice makes perfect, so if you're a bit worried about a big presentation you have to make in front of a group of people, why not ask one or two friends to act as your audience in a role-playing scenario? This will help you become more familiar with the situation, easing nervousness you may feel when it's time for the real presentation. You can go even further and have your friends ask questions so you can plan how to handle that scenario. Make sure, however, to choose friends that will take your situation seriously.

### 31-69

At the present time, your social anxiety is not extreme, but it could still be causing problems for you. It is advisable that you address this issue while your anxiety is still at a moderate level, preferably with the help of a speech coach, life coach or therapist. Think back to specific situations when your anxiety got out of hand – are there any patterns? Is it worse when you meet someone new, or only when you speak up in front of a group? It also helps to identify the exact moment when you start to feel anxious. Is it when someone you don't know asks you a question or when you have to make a presentation in front of an authority figure? This information can help you determine what triggers your anxiety and from there, plan how to prepare yourself for these social situations.

### 70-100

Your level of social anxiety has reached a point where the intervention of a therapist may be required. You seem to have a great deal of difficulty navigating social situations with ease and this has likely caused problems in your life. While social anxiety can be overwhelming, it is a fear that can be conquered. The key is to develop an exposure programme. To master a situation that causes you discomfort, break it down into small steps. If, for example, you feel anxious about approaching a group of people at work/school, set small goals for yourself that lead up to that behaviour. First, say 'Hi' to someone different each day. Then move on to making small talk about something in the news that day. Slowly but surely you will make progress. And remember, you don't have to do this alone – a therapist can guide you through the entire process.

Most people experience some discomfort when they deal with social situations. Maybe you get butterflies before you have to make a speech, or perhaps you're worried about getting tongue-tied when you're being introduced to someone new. It might be that you just consider yourself to be a little shy. These are natural reactions to potentially stressful situations.

Social phobia (also known as social anxiety disorder) is a persistent and obsessive fear of social situations, in which a person feels that their anxiety is beyond their control and is interfering with their life. This is one of the most common mental health problems in the world, yet most of us know little about it. According to SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group), optimal treatment includes psychotherapy and medication. **■**