



Resource for MHW event holders

## What is Social Anxiety?

Social Anxiety is a very normal and common experience. Everyone might experience it in different situations and throughout different parts of life. At some point, most people experience feelings of apprehension, especially around public speaking or venturing outside their comfort zone. However, social anxiety is a medically diagnosed condition and falls within the category of Generalised Anxiety Disorders.

Some people say that social anxiety makes them feel like a wounded animal, very scared. Some other people feel like social anxiety is like a wall blocking them from a good life. Others have described social anxiety as feeling as though bullets are coming towards them and they don't know which to dodge first. People with Social Anxiety need support, kindness and the provision of space to say no in difficult situations. People from all cultures, communities and ages may experience some form of social anxiety.

Some ideas from people who have learnt how to overcome social anxiety include:

- Knowing that it is OK to politely say no if a person isn't feel comfortable to do something, go somewhere or meet someone
- If a person really needs to or wants to go somewhere and you don't feel comfortable, encourage them to ask a friend, family member or colleague to accompany them

There are lots of services providing support workers for people experiencing social anxiety. Viewpoints from others experiencing social anxiety provide insight, but it is important to note everyone's experience is different. Each person will have their own ways of coping - encourage the person to embrace what works best for them!

### **HOW IT MAY LOOK**

Blushing, sweating, excessive swallowing, shaking hands, increased heart rate, diarrhoea and nausea, and muscle tension. People are known to have school avoidance and workplace problems. Their interpersonal relationships may suffer as a result.

### **FEARED SITUATIONS**

Speaking in public, giving a speech or presentation, meeting new people or event people known to them, talking to teachers or doctors or people of authority, eating or drinking in public, going to a party or function, using the telephone, being the centre of attention.

### **SUPPORTING PARTICIPATION IN YOUR MHW EVENT**

- Include a contact name and number on your flyer so people can ring you for more information
- Have a welcoming person with a name easily visible at the event
- Encourage people to "bring a friend" on your flyer
- Maybe an invitation to drop in and look around before the event commences, if this is possible

For more information and to access resources relating to Social Anxiety, visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)