

7 Ways to Soothe your Shyness

Copyright © 2006 Uncommon Knowledge Ltd

Shy people instinctively know that they are missing out. Shyness equals lost opportunities, less pleasure and fewer social connections. Shyness can be crippling but there are tried and tested ways to make it a thing of the past.

When I was fifteen I was shy. I recall an attractive girl attempting to engage me in conversation. My shyness made me focus on me instead of her. I heard my own voice but not hers and I thought about what I was trying to say instead of what she was trying to say.

The formula for shyness is "too much focus on the self" plus anxiety. To make it even more unpleasant, sometimes when you are feeling shy you experience physical sensations which 'hijack' your calm logical self.

My pulse raced, my mouth dried up and I felt like the village idiot! I couldn't think what to say so I said nothing apart from making barely audible grunting noises! Cary Grant eat your heart out! When I detected pity in her eyes (or was it contempt, or boredom) I mumbled my excuse and got out of there. I hated being shy and was determined to change it.

How shyness is developed and maintained

Shyness really is a combination of social anxiety and social conditioning. To overcome shyness you need to learn to relax socially. This enables you to direct your attention away from yourself and gives you the space to practice certain conversational skills. In most cases, the heightened emotions of socializing when young simply condition the sufferer to respond to social events with fear, instead of excitement and pleasure.

Relaxed socializing is so pleasurable, not to say productive, but it is an advantage denied to many until they learn to relax. To start reducing your own shyness, I want you to absorb the following tips and ideas and start to put them into practice:

- 1) Think about the way you feel and behave around familiar people you are comfortable and spontaneous around. It's that feeling transferred to new people and situations that equates to your emerging social confidence.
- 2) Focus your attention away from yourself. Sure, you can think a little bit about how you are coming across, but if all your focus is on

your own words and feelings then you might as well be by yourself. Notice what other people are wearing and make a mental note, listen to their conversation, imagine where they might live, make a point of remembering names. Not only does this give you more to talk about, it also 'dilutes' social anxiety leaving you feeling calmer.

3) Ask people open questions. Many people like to talk about themselves and will find you interesting if you find them interesting. Ask questions that require more than a 'yes'/'no' response such as 'What do you like about this place?' rather than: 'Do you like this place?' Once they've answered use 'add-on' questions connected to the first such as: 'What other places do you like in this city...?' Next you can express your views. This is a great way to get the conversation going. If the conversation doesn't 'take' then no matter, you've done your bit.

4) Stop trusting your imagination so much! Have you ever had an imaginary picture in your mind of a holiday destination only to arrive and find the reality is different from the way you had imagined? That's how reliable imagination is. Stop imagining what others think. I do lots of public speaking and I've long since stopped trying to second guess what others think of me - it's just too painful. Besides, what a person thinks about you has a lot more to do with who they are than who you are.

5) Stop using 'all or nothing' thinking. The 'completely this/completely that' style of thought occurs when you are emotional. People who are depressed, angry or anxious see reality in terms of differing extremes, simplistic all or nothing terms. An angry person is 'right' and you are 'wrong'; the depressed person feels like a 'failure' while others are a 'success'. In reality, life is composed of infinite gray areas. So stop fearing that you might say the 'wrong' thing! Or that people will 'hate' you. Once you start to relax more socially you'll notice much less black or white thinking because anxiety actually causes you to think in all or nothing terms.

6) Take your time. You don't have to blurt things out. Ask questions and if questions are asked of you can take time to consider your response (within reason). Don't just blurt out what you think might be the 'right' answer. A slow answer is a relaxed answer.

7) Finally, use hypnotic rehearsal. Hypnosis is the quickest way to change your instinctive/emotional response to any situation. Only think about meeting others when your mind and body is relaxed. This conditions you to associate relaxation with being around new people. In fact you'll find that when you relax deeply enough often enough whilst hypnotically rehearsing being comfortable around

others you'll reach the point where you just can't be shy any more!
This is what I call a 'happy inability!'

I now love meeting new people and suspect that my current social confidence would be unrecognizable to my fifteen year old self.

Former 'shy guy' Mark Tyrrell is Creative Director of Uncommon Knowledge Ltd and regularly demonstrates his lack of shyness to audiences of hundreds. He teaches people how to use hypnosis and sensible psychology to lower anxiety and improve confidence. He has helped create a hypnosis session so that others can overcome shyness as he did:

http://www.hypnosisdownloads.com/downloads/self_improvement/overcoming_shyness.html