

Maintaining Your Social Anxiety Gains

During COVID-19

Volume 1, Issue 27
April 29, 2020

Remember that we are all learning a new way of socially being, you are not alone.



If you have recovered from social anxiety, are experiencing it now, or want to improve your social interactions – here are a few CBT tips to help.

Your Improved Social Interactions Checklist

Anxiety comes in many forms, shapes and situations and social anxiety can especially increase emotional pain and suffering, as well as impact relationships. Because having social connections and supports is so important to our mental health and subjective well-being, nurturing this aspect of our life is important. During this global pandemic, these social interactions are even more important to us but may need some coaching, practice and exposure training.

Social Skills Basics

While you try to catch up on what the social norms are during this “new normal” it’s also necessary to recognize it’s a “new normal” for all of us – many people haven’t

interacted virtually over video conferencing before... so be gentle with yourself and your expectations. For online interactions, some of the same social norms exist, and some new norms are forming. Here's a list of some current social skills you may want to check and practice:

If you are uncomfortable on video calls, go on a preview call just yourself and stay there until your anxiety decreases.



Contributed by
Charity Fleming
Registered Social Worker &
Cognitive Behaviour Therapist

- **Ask what platform people would like to talk on – phone, FaceTime, Zoom, Snapchat?** Giving options and becoming familiar with the options yourself will increase your new 2020 social skills development
- **Check in to make sure the person's technology is working and of course if they have time to talk.** Because of increasing home demands and decreasing privacy at times, people generally need more check ins and permission to end calls if needed.
- **Accept and expect interruptions graciously** – since those with families are self-isolating all together, there are likely to be more interruptions during times that previously may have been uninterrupted (like during school or daytime hours).
- **Try to be bring humour to uncomfortable situations** – even for yourself if you are fumbling or overwhelmed or stumbling over your words... now is a time we are all experiencing heightened stress, so learn to laugh about it and recover in the moment
- **Make eye contact** – although this may mean looking into the camera rather than someone's face, try doing both to give the appearance of making eye contact over video conferencing platforms.
- **Focus on the other person, not yourself** – if you are a socially conscious person then having yourself on screen may seem intimidating or distracting but focusing on the other person will be more beneficial to the relationship. Sure, make one joke about your hair or whatever bothers you about your on-screen image, but then switch your focus to the person. This will enrich the interaction and help them feel heard and listened to.