

Social Phobia

Besides seeking professional help, other helpful strategies to consider:

- Acknowledge your student's social anxiety when it presents. Do not downplay your student's anxiety by saying something like, "Come on, don't be shy."
- Find out from your student what types of social situations are causing him/her much anxiety or distress. Get the student to rate his/her anxiety levels from 1 to 10 ('1' being not anxious at all; '10' being extremely anxious) to get a sense of what social situations causes him/her most distress.
- Teach your student specific relaxation or cognitive strategies that can help him/her better manage his/her anxiety in social situations. (For specific relaxation and cognitive strategies in managing anxiety, please refer to 'F' and 'U' in the section on 'Tips to help your student cope with his/her anxiety')
- Support your student to gradually overcome his/her anxiety by exposing him/her to a social situation he/she feels least anxious about first. Encourage your student to use the relaxation or cognitive strategies you have taught in managing his/her anxiety in a particular situation. When the student feels more confident and ready, do encourage him/her to face a social situation with a higher level of anxiety using the same strategies. Repeat this step until the student is able to manage the anxiety in the social situation that is causing him/her the most distress. For example, if the student wishes to overcome his/her anxiety in giving a presentation in front of the class, get the student to practice presenting in front of a friend first, followed by a few classmates, then a group of classmates and finally in front of the whole class. Encourage the student to manage his/her anxiety in these social situations with the relaxation or cognitive strategies that have been taught to him/her.
- Praise your student for not avoiding the social situations that cause him/her anxiety.
- For students whom you think that their social anxiety is compounded by their social skills deficits, it is also helpful to teach them social skills.