

## Social Phobia

Besides seeking professional help, other helpful strategies to consider:

- Acknowledge your child's social anxiety when it presents. Do not downplay your child's anxiety by saying something like, "Come on, don't be shy."
- Find out from your child what types of social situations cause him/her much anxiety or distress. Get your child 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.
- Practice with your child specific relaxation or cognitive strategies that can help him manage his/her anxiety better in social situations. (For specific relaxation and cognitive strategies to manage anxiety, please refer to 'F' and 'U' in the section on 'Tips to help your child cope with his/her anxiety')
- Support your child to gradually overcome his anxiety by exposing him to a social situation he/she feels least anxious about first. Encourage your child to use the relaxation or cognitive strategies you have taught to manage his/her anxiety in that situation. When the child feels more confident about himself/herself in that social situation, encourage your child to face up to a social situation that causes him/her the next higher level of anxiety by using the strategies that have been taught to him/her. Repeat this step until the child is able to manage her anxiety in the social situation that is causing him/her the most distress or when the student has achieved the goal of overcoming his/her anxiety in a particular social situation. For example, if your child wishes to overcome his/her anxiety presenting in front of the class, get your child to practice presenting in front of the immediate family, followed by family and cousins and finally perhaps invite some of your child's closer classmates to your home so that you child can practice presenting in front of them. The more your child practices, the more confident your child will be in the real situation. If your child is still very anxious, consider speaking to your child's teacher to allow your child to present in a smaller group and to gradually present in front of larger groups as the school term progresses.
- Praise your child for not avoiding the social situations that cause him/her anxiety.
- The more you expose your child to various social situations, the more confident your child will be. However, make sure you introduce social activities at a comfortable pace. You child might progress from small playdates with cousins to playdates with classmates and finally to birthday parties.