

What can I do if I am struggling with shyness?



See a counsellor

A personal counsellor can help develop the skills which can help you overcome shyness.

See a doctor

If you feel like your shyness is extreme and is interfering with your daily functioning, it may benefit you to see a doctor.

Appointments can be made at Health & Counselling Services (HCS) by calling 613-520-6674 or by dropping by HCS located at 2600 CTTC Building.

All appointments are confidential

CU Healthy

HCS wants to CU Healthy! The Health Promotion Team at HCS tries to achieve this through our:

- Resource Centre
- Student Peer Helpers
- Website (carleton.ca/health)
- Workshops

The Health Promotion Team promotes healthy lifestyles and wellness and can provide you with information about stress, colds, nutrition, sexuality, alcohol, etc. Contact the Resource Centre for more information at 613-520-2600 ext. 6544 or carletonwellness@gmail.com.



2600 CTTC Building

613-520-6674

carleton.ca/health

SHYNESS



Health ^{and} Counselling
SERVICES
Carleton University

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Introduction

Shyness is a social emotion that affects one's thoughts, feelings and behaviour. It involves feeling scared, nervous, uncomfortable, self-conscious or insecure in the presence of others. When people feel shy they hold back from saying or doing things because of fear of others' reactions. Several physical characteristics also accompany shyness including blushing or feeling flushed, shaky, speechless and breathless. When shyness is extreme, it is referred to as social anxiety, social phobia or anxiety disorder.

When does shyness occur?

Shyness usually occurs in specific social situations such as meeting someone new, the first day of a new job, presenting in class or initiating conversation with someone you are attracted to. Feeling unsure about the outcome of a situation, worrying about the reactions of others, or being the centre of attention can increase feelings of shyness. People tend to feel less shy in familiar situations in which a certain outcome is expected.

What causes shyness?

Several factors may contribute to shyness:

- **Temperament:** A person may simply have a shy personality, which is often an inherited trait.
- **Learned behaviour:** If family members or friends behave shyly or uncomfortably in social situations, this may influence the way a person approaches similar situations.
- **Uncomfortable or negative experiences:** Getting forced into uncomfortable situations can increase shyness. Also, being bullied, humiliated by others, or receiving a negative response in past situations can make a person retreat even further.

What is social phobia?

Social phobia is an extreme form of shyness that is characterized by overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations. It can be specific to one type of social situation, such as speaking to a large audience, or it can be present in a variety of social situations such as asking a question in class, shopping at a public mall or attending a party.



How can I become less shy?

- **Learn and practice social skills:** Practice skills such as eye contact, body language, smiling, introductions and conversations with people you feel most comfortable with.
- **Don't negatively judge yourself:** Start thinking more positively about yourself and your skills. Treat yourself as you would a good friend and accept your imperfections.
- **Plan ahead:** When you are ready to try something you have been fearing, pre-plan what you will say and do, rehearse it and go for it. Do not be upset if it doesn't go perfectly.
- **Act as if you're not shy:** Take on a more self-assured attitude.
- **Work on your assertiveness:** Assertiveness skills can help you stand up for yourself and become more confident in various situations. See the brochure on "Assertiveness."
- **Focus on your strengths:** Recognize and acknowledge what you are good at. When you are in a situation that evokes emotions of fear or anxiety, try to recall your strengths and positive attributes.