

Overcoming Shyness



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5 Steps to Overcoming Shyness

Shyness can be debilitating. It can prevent us from living an adventurous life; it can hold us back from getting a promotion, making the presentation, taking the chance on someone we find attractive and interesting.

In many cases, a mental health professional or hypnotherapist can alter these behaviors. In the meantime, there are certain things that you can do on your own to take control over your shyness and keep it from interfering with the life you want to lead.

Where should you begin?

1. **Ask where the stress is coming from.** Note whether it's because you have to give a speech on Friday, or your crush is sitting too close. What is the core of this feeling? What you're experiencing is often the symptom of a deeper problem. For instance:
 - Often shyness comes from a poor self-image, imagining others are more important than you are.
 - You're overly worried about the way others perceive you.
 - You've been labeled "shy" for so long you've accepted it as truth.
2. **Accept that you're shy.** Be comfortable with it. The harder you fight it, the stronger it gets and the more trouble you'll have interacting with the world.

3. **Realize when the shyness kicks in.** Are you shy around everyone or only the people who matter to you? What about when talking to someone whose opinion doesn't matter? Shyness is rarely ever a 100% all-encompassing problem; it varies in intensity depending on the situation.
4. **Start writing things down.** When do the symptoms happen? What are you doing? Where are you? Who are you with? Order them by severity. When was the worst attack? When was the least?
5. **Now that you have the list start working through the triggers.** Capture a dozen or so examples and sort them by severity and start at the bottom, with the least stressful situations. The only way to conquer a fear is by facing it. If the least stressful situation on your list was having to talk to a coworker, then strike up a conversation with them. If the least stressful incident on your list is talking to a stranger, pay someone a compliment on what they're wearing.

Start with the least stressful things on your list until you're accustomed to facing these situations. By getting in some practice, you're going to notice how good it feels to accomplish this task. Once you're more comfortable with the process, you'll have a better chance to conquer the larger, more intimidating items.

Facing your fears makes them smaller and less frightening. You can do this. Just give yourself the chance.

10 Techniques to Move from Shy to Self-Confident

Shyness can be debilitating, especially in a work environment. It can also be overcome, but it takes some time and effort. Consulting with a therapist might be indicated if the shyness is extreme, as it could be a sign of Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD).

There are steps to reducing shyness. Practice these steps every day, and the shyness will begin to dwindle and even dissipate.

1. You may think that you radiate shyness, that it's written all over your face, but you'd be wrong. Most won't realize you're shy if you don't mention it. Not that it's anything to be ashamed of, just don't mention it.
2. Keep it light. Yes, shyness can be crippling and severe, but if you're questioned, laugh it off or treat it as no big deal. Others take their cues from you. If you're not concerned, they won't be either.
3. Does shyness have secondary symptoms such as blushing, nervousness, shortness of breath? Admit to the obvious but separate that from being shy. "I've always been a bit nervous in new situations. This is just normal for me."
4. Let yourself shine through Avoid the well-meaning person who introduces you to others as "shy" or "quiet," Don't rely on labels, let yourself be you. You are more than a single trait.

5. Calm the voice in your head that kicks you when you're down. We all make mistakes, and we all occasionally act the fool. That's ok to do once in a while, but don't let that voice in your head hold you back.
6. Write down what's the best and brightest about you. Get someone to help. Intelligence, creativity, easy-going manner – all of these are positive traits. Write them down and when that voice tries to drag you down again, go over them. Remind yourself how great you are.
7. Take a good look at how you feel around your friends. Are you positive and energized or do you question yourself when you're with them? Be honest. You cannot grow if you are surrounded by people who constantly tell you how inadequate you are.
8. Avoid the bullies. There will ever be those who would bully you, would drag you down. These are relatives, coworkers, toxic relationships that convince you how far you are from perfection.
9. Look at others, the ones that seem bold and self-confident. What do they do, how do they react? What can you do differently? Emulate the best of their behaviors.
10. Forgive yourself. You'll make mistakes; you'll fall on your face. That's how things are. Don't let one mistake derail your efforts.

These are basic beginning steps to help pull you out of the shyness spiral. Keep in mind; you may want to talk to a behavioral health specialist for the bigger issues.

Am I Shy or Just an Introvert?

Some people are shy, while others are described as introverts. Is there a difference?

Yes, there is, and those differences are important if you want to change. Working with shyness is very different than working with someone who's introverted.

But does it matter? Is it a bad thing to be shy or introverted?

If you're happy with where you are in life, then there's no motivation or even reason to change. But if you want to work on your social and professional relationships, if you want to interact and talk to people with confidence, then it's probably time to do something about it. And to do that, it's important to know the what it means to be shy vs. what it is to be an introvert. How do you find out? First, ask yourself a couple of questions.

1. Where does your energy come from? The primary difference is largely a matter of energy. An introvert is physically and emotionally drained after being in a crowd. An introvert gains energy by being isolated, reading a book, or watching TV. For the record, extroverts are just the opposite.

Being an introvert doesn't mean you're completely against attending the occasional party, it just indicates that you recharge better alone.

Shy people? They lose energy everywhere.

2. What kind of friendships do you enjoy most? There are benefits to being an introvert. Introverts are experts in detail-oriented work; they tend to be more open to self-analysis. But it's the friendships that matter most. While introverts generally have fewer friends, the ones they do have are dearer to them than anything. Shy people tend to have very few friendships at all – meaningful or otherwise.

3. What kind of conversation do you prefer? Introverts are typically bad at small talk, but a deeply meaningful conversation is right up their alley. Someone who's shy isn't going to be able to manage either.

So what if you are an introvert? Does that mean you can change? The short and quick answer is: you can't. It's the way you were born. On the other hand, that doesn't mean there isn't hope.

First, it's important to realize that being an introvert is as serious as being born left-handed or with green eyes. It's not uncommon, and it's perfectly natural. There is nothing wrong with having been born an introvert. But if it's getting in the way or where you want to go in life, it might be time to act on the external symptoms.

Secondly, if you think about it, it would make sense that extroverts who are wired to love crowds would be constantly front and center. Someone that gained energy from crowds would seek them out. Therefore, extroverts have much more knowledge about and practice in social situations. Take a step out now and again, Observe, learn all the social cues you never learned as a child. You can master your fears in social circles.

Whether you're shy or introverted, you can be successful socially. Remember, social skills are learned with practice. You can become the person you want to be!

Cure Shyness Once and For All with Hypnotherapy

It starts when we're young. For some reason, interacting with our peers is unpleasant. Perhaps we're rejected, bullied or teased, and in order to avoid that pain, we retreated. We would stay where we felt we were safe, alone with a book, or lost in a television show.

Because at some point we stopped interacting, we didn't learn how to interact. Our natural inclination becomes what we learned way back then: don't risk it. This mindset becomes ingrained, part of our identity, and something that we don't trust. We certainly don't try. And while others with different experiences have had the years to learn social skills, they grow in areas where the shy do not. They have the experience that the shy lack, giving them the self-confidence many of us don't have.

The good news? All this means shyness is a "learned response." It doesn't have to be who you are, and it's not part of the DNA. It's just the way you learned to avoid painful situations. It's a conditioned reflex.

If the reflex is truly bad, it can be unlearned or relearned in a different way. Do you hear that voice in your head that says you're not good enough? The one that reminds you of past hurt that tells you over and over and in vivid detail all the

ways you failed? What if that voice wasn't there? What if that voice was saying something different, like reminding you how good you are. What if that voice was on your side? Would you still believe those positive messages as readily as you accepted critique?

There is a way to turn the tables on that nagging voice. There is a way to let you respond in different ways to the same stimulus.

In many cases, hypnotherapy can alter the habitual ways we respond to situations. Hypnotic suggestion can make the reflex action become something more useful than just hiding. Where do you begin?

1. Find a licensed hypnotherapist and talk with him or her about how your shyness interferes with your life and growth. Let them know what runs through your mind as it kicks in, and what you're afraid of happening to you, be it rejection or laughter or abuse.
2. Tell them where these feelings are coming from and then let them work on the part of your brain that reacts from past trauma and not from current day needs.
3. Have an open mind. Hypnotherapy might seem a little weird at first, but it's been proven to be very helpful in treating these kinds of thought processes.
4. Relax. No, the therapist isn't going to make you act like a monkey. Hypnotherapy is designed to work with you, on your personal responses, and only that.

With the help of a hypnotherapist, you truly can reprogram your responses to the world around you. Imagine not being shy – doesn't that alone make trying something new worthwhile?

Four Ways to Stop Shyness from Holding You Back from Life

Being shy can be debilitating. Shyness can prevent you from meeting new people, from making friends, and even from advancing in your career. Shyness isn't "cute" and saying someone is "just shy" dismisses the serious effects that shyness can have on a person.

So what steps can you take to take control of your life when you're shy? How can you press on and have a good life full of adventure when the crippling effects of being shy is right there to get in the way?

There are four steps to consider when dealing with shyness.

1. **It's all in the mind.** Sounds simple, right? Just don't be shy. There. Problem solved. Ironically, it can be that simple. But keep in mind, change won't happen overnight, it will progress slowly over time. How? The first way to overcome shyness is to "act as if." This is a favorite of therapists, mostly because it works. Our actions become habits and habits dictate who we are. Act as though you're bold and courageous, and the most amazing thing will happen – you will be exactly that – bold and courageous.

If you can start simply, taking one different approach and building from there, the next get progressively easier. Start a conversation with a stranger in a waiting room or checkout line. All it takes is one word to begin: “Hello.”

Here’s a tip: find something they are wearing and compliment them on it.

2. **Give yourself time.** No one can wave a wand and lift the shyness. It takes time and practice. You will get rejected, and yes, some of those people might even judge you badly. But keep this in mind: If you’re talking to a stranger, you’ll never see them again. It makes no difference what they think. What someone thinks of you, really is none of your business. Give yourself permission to fail. But don’t quit. Set goals that you can meet. Talk to one person today, and two tomorrow.
3. **Look outward.** When you’re shy, you’re thinking about how you look, how you sound. Take the focus off of you and put it on the person you’re talking to, or the group activity you’re a part of.
4. **Take a genuine interest.** People respond to those who listen. Being interested in someone else’s story is a huge step in overcoming shyness. What’s more, we all have unique and compelling stories. Be the person others can talk to. Let them know there is someone that cares, and they’ll likely do the same for you.

Overcoming shyness takes time and effort, but the results are astonishing. With a little effort and some time, you will be living a larger, more active and more adventurous life.

Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) or Shy?

If you've ever been to a seminar or "team building" event, you know what an ice-breaker is. Everyone breaks off into groups with a common goal, of either, solving a problem, reaching a consensus, or creating a project. It's a time for everyone to speak up, to participate.

It's a time to be an extrovert.

We as a society, praise and treasure the extrovert among us. It's such a desirable trait that businesses often assume that everyone is one and makes no accommodation for the shy. Shy people are told to "get over it" or to "speak up more" or worse, to "loosen up."

But shyness is a learned behavior based on reaction to fear. And while there are techniques and exercises that can be learned to help overcome these fears, it takes time and effort to do so.

New studies, however, are finding something different about shyness. This is something not learned, yet is intrinsic to our makeup. Which means it cannot be "unlearned" any more than eyes can be taught not to be blue. There is a subset of people who are referred to as Highly Sensitive People. Studies also indicate that this might be the true ideal, more valuable than a roomful of extroverts. Believe it or not, Highly Sensitive People are, and have been, great contributors to the world as a whole.

Who are these Highly Sensitive People? Let's look at their traits:

- They have strong imaginations.
- They are highly intelligent.
- They have an insatiable curiosity.
- They have a strong work ethic.
- They experience great compassion.
- They possess a deep appreciation for art and music.
- They are able to notice what others miss.

...and feel exhausted and drained at events with sensory overload.

Oddly, even though Highly Sensitive People are often misdiagnosed as “shy” or “introverted” or have a “social phobia,” twenty percent of Highly Sensitive People are actually extroverts.

But society seems to be stacked against them. Brainstorming sessions at work, being called on in class when the hand isn't raised, team building exercises...these are geared for the extroverts leaving a large percentage of the rest struggling to keep up.

But given time and, in many cases, isolation to plan and prepare, HSPs make excellent leaders and innovators. People who show the signs of HSP include Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

If you think that you may be a Highly Sensitive Person, first celebrate the fact that you're different. Then think about meeting with a behavioral health specialist to address the issues that hold you back from being who you want to be. But more than that, give yourself time to prepare and to organize and don't let others rush you.

The world would be a lesser place without you.

How Practicing Mindfulness Can Help You Overcome Your Shyness

Shyness comes from old habits learned at an early age. As little children, we seek to belong, and if we are rebuffed, it hurts. It can be even more painful to be bullied, laughed at, or shunned by our peers.

We're naturally programmed to avoid pain, so when this happens, we stop trying and lose out on years of learning how to exist in social situations. The natural way our peers have learned to fit into a group took years of learning. These are years the victims of shyness spent isolated and alone.

Shyness was a way to protect ourselves at one time, but now it's become a burden. Now it prevents growth and relationships and professional growth. The good news is that you can retrain your brain and overcome shyness.

Talking to a mental health professional is one way to overcome shyness. You might need help in getting to the root of what you fear and facing a particular fear. Another and more immediate technique is called **Mindfulness Meditation**.

What is Mindfulness Meditation? Its roots are deep in Buddhism, but it's a method of meditation. Mindfulness is the process of bringing your mind into the present situation. For example, your shyness may inhibit your ability to speak up in a crowd. Some people say it "just happens" and it's beyond their control.

But there are reasons for things happening. In this case, our brains recognize patterns, especially ones that have dire consequences. Like talking to the "cool kids" in grade school and being rebuffed or teased or bullied. To a child, that is a very traumatic event, and the fear of that happening again stays with us until it's dealt with, sometimes even years later.

Mindfulness Meditation is a way to tell your brain that you are not that child anymore and that the chances of being bullied or rebuffed are greatly reduced. Mindfulness Meditation tells your fears that this is now, today and you are different and that the people you are with are different people. It's a way to learn to stop acting out of fear.

So what should you do?

1. When the shyness kicks in: STOP. Just stop.
2. Now stand straight, and take a deep breath or two.
3. Notice the triggers that set it off

4. Acknowledge the fear, don't fight it, accept it.
5. Smile. Remind yourself you are an adult; you are capable—this isn't a playground at recess.

You can do this.

That's it. But stay with it. Keep letting yourself know that it's ok to be scared, so long as you remember that you're not going to let the fear control you any longer.

Six Tips for Overcoming Shyness

Shyness is often portrayed as “sweet” or “cute.” Oddly enough, the word “just” usually precedes it, as in “you're just shy” or “it's just shyness.” But to those that are shy, there is no “just” about it. Shyness can be debilitating and can interfere with a healthy lifestyle, and with every social interaction and relationship.

But how do you overcome shyness? How do you take control again?

There are steps, positive steps you can take to overcome the effects of shyness. While you might always be shy, following these steps will help to lessen the impact of being shy.

1. AS IF

Psychiatrists call this “act as if.” How you act helps determine how you will be perceived and, in the end, will change how you feel inside. Act confident. Remember when the training wheels came off and the bicycle was a wobbly two-wheeled thing that wouldn’t stay upright? The moment you went for the speed is the moment it all clicked in. Take charge.

2. JUMP IN

Talk to people. Talk to the person next to you at the checkout line. Strike up a conversation in the waiting room. Yes, you may get rejected, but what difference does it make what a stranger thinks of you? Find someone you’re attracted to and ask them to dance. Or even just to talk. It may come to nothing, but if you don’t try, you can be sure it will come to nothing.

3. ENLIST

Join up. Take a class. Join a gym. Volunteer at a community theater. Go where there are people and join their “tribe.” Become a part of the group, as it gives you direct connections with other individuals and a solid place to start branching out socially.

4. SPEAK

Practice talking. You can start in your own living room, practicing a speech or chat. Talk to strangers, friends, anyone, and everyone. Join Toastmasters. Find a way for your voice to be heard.

5. RISK IT

A great deal of shyness stems from the fear of being judged. Let yourself be more open and vulnerable. Start with family and friends and let them in to see the real you. You'll be surprised how deep those relationships can go.

6. PUT YOUR BACK INTO IT (And Your Eyes)

A lot of communication is done with body language. When you talk to someone, look in their eyes, stand tall, arms at your sides. Be relaxed but try to curl up as though expecting a blow. Speak clearly and calmly but speak while making eye contact.

Shyness doesn't have to be overcome; you just need to be taught the proper strategies to deal with the effects. Even small efforts will yield great results, so there's no reason not to try. Take a deep breath and jump right in!

The Difference Between Shyness and Social Anxiety Disorder

When we are children, we learn to interact with others. But for people with Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), they are often unable to develop these abilities. Sadly, many of these individuals are misdiagnosed as being "extremely shy."

Children untreated for SAD grow up accustomed to avoidance and fear of social situations. They often feel panic about being forced into a position where they are the center of attention, such as when they're required to give a speech or a verbal

report. These fears inhibit the growth of social abilities that continue to grow worse over time, leading to a lack of career success, financial success, and relationship success.

It's estimated that a full $\frac{3}{4}$ of all sufferers of SAD never get treatment at all and live with the crippling effects their entire lives - simply because they aren't aware they have SAD or that there is a treatment for it!

Ironically, the success rate for treatment for those who have gotten treatment is over 70%. Yet the sufferers that are treated often wait decades before seeking help.

So what's the difference then, between SAD and shyness? The three main areas of comparison are:

1. The intensity of the fear
2. The level of avoidance
3. The amount of impairment caused in the life of the victim

Shyness can cause anxiety or even a certain level of fear in a new or difficult social setting.

SAD differs in that it causes deep, debilitating fear. Stressing about giving a speech or report can cause sleepless nights for weeks on end. It can be the cause of physical symptoms that include:

- racing heartbeat
- stress levels that are intense enough to inhibit breathing
- sweating
- dizziness
- fainting

SAD can cause such severe symptoms that the victim often finds themselves unable to function at all. Being unable to meet in a social situation means being unable to date or make friends.

To find out more, or to discover if you have SAD, consult a mental health professional. If you're hesitant to do so, ask yourself these questions.

1. What potential benefit (personal or professional) have you missed because you were too afraid of looking foolish or being embarrassed?
2. How far have you gone and what sacrifices have you made to avoid being the center of attention?
3. Does the thought of looking foolish or "stupid" cause anxiety in you? Does the thought of being embarrassed make you panic?

There are therapies and medications available to assist in the symptoms of SAD. Talk to your doctor so that you can get referred to a behavioral specialist.

Three Possible Reasons for Shyness

Perhaps you've said it yourself: "Why do I have to be shy?" Shyness can be so frustrating. It can damage relationships and hurt your career. Shyness will often leave you nervous and will even keep you from living to your full potential.

Where does shyness come from? What is it that makes a person shy?

Not surprisingly, it's all a matter of attitude. Shyness starts with what goes on in your mind. There are three basic items that work in your brain to produce and promote shyness.

1. **Where are you at your worst?** Saying a person is "shy" covers a lot of ground. Are you as shy around a grandparent as a prospective date? Are you as shy about asking the pharmacist a question as you are introducing yourself to a new coworker? Probably not. Your level of "shyness" will change throughout the day. Shyness is usually an indicator that you need something from the other person, often acceptance or approval. Few of us are shy around people we care nothing about.
2. **Sometimes it's about authority figures.** We become shy around people who we perceive to be somehow more important than we are, for whatever reason. "Importance" could mean someone a higher education. Or they might be more attractive than you or have more money. Around people we believe to be as ordinary as ourselves, or among those that we find of lesser worth, the shyness usually evaporates. Celebrities have endless stories of fans who faint or can't talk.

So, what can you do? Raise yourself in your eyes first. Realize that all these people who are supposedly above you are just people too.

3. **You're insecure.** Shy people often have issues with body image or with their concept of themselves. Sometimes this issue comes from something that's clearly visible, like a stammer or stutter. So for someone with a speech impediment, rather than risk being laughed at, they just say nothing at all.

Maybe you feel stupid, awkward or foolish. Maybe you feel like you're dull and uninteresting. A lot of shyness is simply not being able to convince yourself that you're worth hearing. Everyone has a story, and everyone is interesting. It's not your place to decide that you have led a boring life. What you consider usual, someone else might find fascinating.

Knowing where shyness comes from is one of the first steps toward overcoming the effects of shyness. Shyness is a way to protect yourself from people that could hurt you, either directly or by rejection. The important thing is to find that strength within you that got you this far. Work on your self-image, and you'll be amazed at how much more confident you truly are.