

# A Parents Guide: Supporting Teens with Social Anxiety

## The importance of self-care for parents

Parents who take care of themselves when they have a child with social anxiety are better able to manage their own emotions, serve as positive role models, demonstrate patience and understanding, build resilience, and provide optimal support to their child. By prioritising self-care, parents create a healthy and supportive family environment that contributes to the overall well-being of both the parents and the child.

## How to look after yourselves as parents

1. **Educate Yourself:** Take the time to learn about social anxiety disorder and its impact on your teenager. Understanding the condition will help you approach their struggles with empathy and provide appropriate support. Research reputable sources, consult mental health professionals, and consider joining support groups or attending workshops for parents of teens with social anxiety.
2. **Practice Self-Care:** As a parent, it's essential to prioritise your own well-being. Make time for self-care activities that help you relax, recharge, and reduce stress. Engage in activities you enjoy, such as exercising, reading, listening to music, or spending time with loved ones. Taking care of yourself will enable you to be more present and supportive for your teenager.
3. **Seek Support:** Parenting a teenager with social anxiety can be challenging, and it's crucial to seek support for yourself. Reach out to other parents who may be going through similar experiences or seek guidance from a therapist or counselor. Sharing your feelings, concerns, and experiences with others who understand can provide you with valuable support and help you cope better.
4. **Set Realistic Expectations:** Understand that social anxiety can impact your teenager's ability to participate in certain activities or socialise comfortably. Set realistic expectations for their progress and recognise that small steps forward should be celebrated. Avoid comparing your teenager to others or pressuring them to conform to societal norms. Supporting them in their own journey will foster their self-esteem and confidence.
5. **Take Breaks and Practice Boundaries:** Caring for a teenager with social anxiety can be emotionally draining at times. It's essential to recognise when you need a break and not feel guilty about it. Establish healthy boundaries that allow you to take time for yourself without feeling overwhelmed. Delegate responsibilities and ask for help from trusted family members or friends when needed. Remember, you are better able to support your teenager when you are well-rested and emotionally balanced.

## How to deal with school when your Teen has Social Anxiety

- **Open Communication with School Staff:** Establish open and regular communication with your teen's school staff, including teachers, counselors, and administrators. Inform them about your teen's social anxiety and provide them with relevant information about their needs and challenges. Collaborate with the school to create a supportive environment that understands and accommodates your teen's difficulties.
- **Develop a Supportive School Plan:** Work with the school staff to develop an individualised plan, such as a 504 Plan or an Individualised Education Program (IEP), that outlines specific accommodations and support strategies for your teen. This may include adjustments to classroom seating, flexible deadlines, alternative assignments, or access to counseling services. Regularly review and update the plan as needed.
- **Encourage Gradual Exposure:** Gradual exposure to social situations can help your teen build their confidence and manage their anxiety. Work with the school to identify opportunities for controlled exposure, such as group activities, presentations, or clubs. Start with smaller, less intimidating settings and gradually increase the level of challenge as your teen becomes more comfortable.
- **Foster a Supportive Peer Network:** Encourage your teen to build positive relationships with supportive peers. Identify clubs, extracurricular activities, or interest groups where they can connect with like-minded individuals who share similar interests. Encourage participation in social activities that align with their comfort level, such as joining a smaller study group or engaging in online discussions related to their passions.

Remember, each teen's experience with social anxiety may vary, so it's important to tailor these guidance points to your specific situation. Additionally, it's crucial to respect your teen's boundaries and work with them to develop a plan that aligns with their comfort level and needs. Regularly check in with your teen to gauge their progress and adjust strategies as necessary.

## What is Social Anxiety?

Social anxiety, or social phobia, is characterised by an intense fear of social situations, fearing embarrassment or judgment from others. Parents should understand that it goes beyond

shyness, and it's important to provide support, seek professional help, and create a supportive environment to help their child manage social anxiety and thrive

## Does your Teen have Social Anxiety?

### Look for these 9 symptoms

Social anxiety can express itself with both mental and physical symptoms, and can be anticipatory (prior to a social event), during a social event or after a social event, these include:

1. Blushing & sweating
2. Trembling
3. Nausea
4. Stomach upset
5. Bowel problems
6. Heart racing
7. Isolation
8. Lack of eye contact
9. Panic attacks

### Teenagers as a result may engage in the following behaviours:

- Excessive use of phone
- Avoiding school and other activities
- Nausea or sickness before school
- Frustration and anger
- Misbehaving at school and home
- Substance abuse

## Why does my Teen experience Social Anxiety?

There could be one or a combination of reasons why your teen might be experiencing social anxiety.

### 5 possible reasons:

- **Environmental factors or experiences**

Children and teenagers who experience trauma or abuse, or grow up in stressful or unstable environments.

- **Bullying:**

Traumatic experiences of social rejection or bullying.

- **Genetics:**

Social anxiety disorder has been found to run in families.

- **Parenting Styles:**

Overprotecting parenting or exposure to excessive criticism within the family context.

- **Socialisation:**

Children who have had limited social experiences or who have not had opportunities to interact with adults or peers may be more likely to feel anxious in social situations.

## A Parents Guide: 3 Do's & Don'ts when dealing with Teen Social Anxiety

### Do's:

- Encourage your teen to participate in activities they enjoy and are good at. This will facilitate confidence building and enhance self esteem.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction: Encourage your teen to gradually expose themselves to situations that trigger their anxiety, in a controlled and supportive environment. This can help them build confidence and overcome their fears.
- Introduce your teen to self-soothing techniques to help them manage their social anxiety such as deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. This will help them understand that there is an ability to control the levels of social anxiety.

### Donts

- Don't minimise their experiences: Avoid minimising your teenager's experiences or telling them to "just relax" or "get over it." This can make them feel misunderstood and invalidated.
- Don't assume you know what's best for them: While you may have good intentions, it's important to involve your teenager in the decision-making process for their treatment and support. Respect their opinions and preferences.
- Don't make their anxiety the center of attention: While it's important to support your teenager with social anxiety, avoid making their anxiety the center of attention in your family. Encourage them to participate in other activities and celebrate their successes outside of social situations.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does Hypnosis feel like?

#### Natural Form of Treatment

Hypnosis is natural, somewhat like day-dreaming. It's something we all do several times a day without realising it! Your teen doesn't need to believe that the therapy will work, they only need to want to change.

#### Relieve Stress With Hypnosis

We use hypnotherapy to help your Teen's mind ease and relax; this natural, safe state of relaxation works wonders in relieving mental stress caused due to social anxiety.

### **Realise Fewer Fears In Everyday Life**

When your teen is free from their social anxiety, they'll have the confidence to go wherever they want without fear or hesitation. Enjoy life together without worry!

## **Why is it so effective in working with Teens?**

Hypnosis is a natural state that most people experience every day, such as when we daydream or become engrossed in a book or movie. This means that hypnosis is a familiar and comfortable experience for most teenagers, making it easier for them to enter into a hypnotic state.

Hypnosis allows for direct communication with the subconscious mind, which is the part of the mind that governs emotions, beliefs, and habits. This is particularly important when working with teens, as their subconscious minds are still developing and can be more receptive to suggestions for positive change.

Hypnosis can help teens access and process difficult emotions and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. This can be especially beneficial for teens who may be resistant to traditional talk therapy or who struggle to express their emotions verbally.

## **What do the sessions look like?**

**The sessions are between 50 minutes to 1 hour, once a week.**

### **Initial Consultation:**

During the first session we will focus on understanding your teen's social anxiety at school to ensure I have a comprehensive understanding of their situation. Based on this information, I will provide your teen with knowledge about how social anxiety may have developed for them. I will assess your teen's current mental health and create a personalised treatment plan that is tailored to their unique goals and needs.

### **The Journey Ahead:**

After the initial consultation we will have sessions weekly embarking on your teens journey of self-improvement. Typically treatment can be between 4-6 sessions however this may be longer or shorter depending on several factors: the nature and severity of social anxiety, readiness and motivation to change and work towards goals and any external elements impacting your teen's life.

Throughout the sessions we will work together to develop positive behaviours and coping mechanisms to help manage your teen's social anxiety in different situations. Through hypnosis, we simulate scenarios that involve interacting with people, which helps establish new automatic responses in your teens mind.

Your teen will experience firsthand how this simple yet effective process can help them overcome their social anxiety and leave them feeling more confident and in control in social situations.

I will work closely with your teen to help identify and overcome any triggers that they may have encountered and review their progress weekly.

### **Knowing When to End Therapy for Teen Social Anxiety:**

You may be wondering, how will my teen know when to end therapy?

We will review your teens progress weekly, when its time to end the sessions this may be decided if your teen feels more confident in social situations, has developed effective coping strategies, and feels equipped to manage future challenges that may arise.

### **How many sessions are recommended?**

4-6 sessions are recommended, however this could be more or less depending on the individual's situation.

### **What do I need to get started?**

No matter where you are located in the world, your teen can get started today.

To get your teen started, all they'll need is:

- A device (such as a tablet, smartphone or PC) with Zoom, Skype, or Microsoft Teams installed
- A credit or debit card to make the online payment (which you'll receive a payment link for)
- Most importantly, your teens willingness and desire to overcome their social anxiety at school

**Find out more about the Social Ease Treatment for Social Anxiety by downloading the PDF from my website.**

**Jo Tripier Lorio is a dedicated therapist who specializes in helping teenagers dealing with social anxiety in both academic and social environments.**

**The Social Ease Programme for Teenagers**