

How To Fight Shyness And Win Confidence



A Step – By – Step Guide

Foreword

All of us possess a cluster of character traits. We're proud of some. We admit to some. We hate some.

And finally, there are some, we'd like to change.

Shyness is one among the first. The reason is very simple. As a shy person (we're sure you'll agree with this) you lose out on so much. Better opportunities at work, more fulfilling relationships and a great, interactive and warm world. Unfortunately by being shy, you close so many doors.

This book will help you understand your shyness better. You can, as you go along, discover yourself, identify your problems and begin the process of change.

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Chapter 1: Comprehend your shyness

- *“At parties and get-togethers, whenever I have to venture out of my acquainted surroundings, I suffer from a harried sensation. I feel scared of going out, especially of attending formal gatherings. I feel tongue-tied; no witty repartee comes to my mind. I lose my ease and act clumsily while eating; I forget to pick up the correct forks and spoons. So I tend to refuse most of the invitations. My social life is steadily plummeting. I spend my Saturday nights in front of my TV, with only my dog to keep me company. But I do not want to spend such a drab and dreary life, I want to go out and have fun too! So I wish I could change myself and get over my limitations.”*
- *“The part of work I hate most is the lunchtime. At lunch, I sit along with my colleagues, but simply fail to take an active part in the lively banter around me. I feel queasy, and badly wish that lunch were over so everyone could go back to work”*
- *“I want to speak out and express my ideas at group discussions. But what stops me is that feeling that everyone would find them stupid. I watch in silence as other people furnish the same ideas and are applauded. I feel it is too great a risk to voice my opinions. So I do not speak. However, at times, I do wish to be able to pioneer concepts.”*

Do any of these situations resemble your plight? Perhaps it does; why else would you want to open this e-book?

The common problem of all the people mentioned here is that, they suffer from shyness. Shyness might be a heritable disorder. But in most cases, your environment is responsible for making you shy. However, there is no need to be worried. According to Philip Zimbardo, 80% of the people who participated in the Stanford Shyness Survey admitted to suffer from shyness at some point in their lives.

What shyness is



Shyness involves a collection of learned reflexes that induces drawing back from contact with people. Thus it is a behavior pattern that is distinguished by hang-ups in social situations. It often interferes with achieving professional as well as interpersonal goals.

The good news is that you can easily dispose of your shyness. It's simply a behavioral modification, a proactive decision that you need to take. All you need to do is to relax while interacting with people in

social situations. Effective communication skills will enrich your life and enable you to live fully. You will become assertive and start to speak up for yourself.

After reading this book you will find out all you need to understand about shyness and also learn seven easy stages that will help you to overcome your diffidence.

So hurry up, move ahead. You will come across tests that you can take and find out your progress.

Factors to bear in mind whenever you encounter a circumstance

Remember these points each time to come upon new people and have to interact with them. The best thing to do would be to learn these by heart or note them down for easy reference later on.

1. There are others like me out there.
2. I possess the right to speak out just like others. It is my fundamental privilege.
3. I am only a human being, it is ok to make slip ups.
4. Making a few mistakes is perfectly all right.
5. I am doing very well. I am no less that the person next to me.

Remember, the key to success is a positive outlook towards life. You have to make an active effort in order to change your traits. You have the power to make miracles happen, only if you yearn to do so. And while you are in the process, be positive and keep reminding yourself, "Yes, it is possible. I can change into a more confident and assured individual".

Chapter 2: Exploring Shyness

According to Ronald Buss, shyness is embarrassment, self-consciousness and unease in social association and feeling insecure around others. However, there is more to shyness.

Shyness springs from the dread of being disapproved and negatively criticized. Those who suffer from shyness become ultra sensitive from their early years, or some times later in life. The result is that, every time they face a challenging situation they tend to raise an insurmountable barricade. They hold back from saying something or doing things because they are over-concerned about how others will respond to them. Every thing that comes easily and normally to other people, cause agonizing pain and appear to be a torment for shy human beings.

The distinction between shyness and social phobia

Shyness is NOT a mental disease. In general, the level of fear, apprehension or nervousness about social situations is a good deal higher in individuals suffering from social phobia than it is in shy people.

Social phobic people have an irrational and persistent horror of social situations that creates in them an intense desire to totally shun social connections. A social phobic often altogether fails to attend a party, while shy people are able to go but may wind up isolated, sitting alone in a corner all through the revelry. The fear of being evaluated by others can induce panic attacks in a phobic person.

Over a period of four years, Dr. Zimbardo carried out a survey among approximately 5000 persons. He recorded his conclusion in an audiotape named *Winning Over Shyness*:

"Shy people are typically not liked by as many people as they like, or want to like them, but, in fact, are often liked by very few."

Shyness and stage fright

There exists a close connection between shyness and stage fright. Shyness is more of a one-to-one phenomenon, the fear lies with facing an audience of one, while stage fright is the panic of facing a number of spectators.

The defining features of shyness

1. Shyness makes people go through a higher degree of anxiety than what is normal. The horror of censure, the anxiety that a much wanted outcome will not come to pass and the fear of 'fear' itself, hold shy people back from making an effort when they are the centre of attention. Normal people also at times feel troubled about

- the upshot of a specific action but their worry does not prevent them from trying. Shy people fret to a much greater extent.
2. Shyness has the tendency to hit at particular social situations. For instance, the first day of school, at the time of being introduced to someone new, especially some one you fancy or feel attracted to, when giving a presentation - situations in which you feel unsure of what to expect. Shyness recedes amidst familiar people and in situations where you are sure of the outcome.
 3. Extremely shy persons find it hard to push through their feelings of shyness. They hesitate to try new things. Ultimately their shyness damages their self-image and often end up spending an agonizingly lonesome life.

Signs of Shyness

1. At any social gathering where most are strangers, you tend to lose your tongue.
2. Every time you get to meet some one new, you find it difficult to talk to them. You feel tensed and nervous if you are to initiate a dialogue.
3. Even if the other person begins the conversation, you keep your replies limited to “yes” and “no”.
4. You shrink from parties and social does simply because you dread sitting alone in a corner.
5. You find it difficult to approach strangers, even for asking directions.
6. At times you have longed to join in a conversation but failed, only because you didn’t know what to say, or were too scared to speak up.
7. You often find yourself replaying conversations in your mind, thinking “I should have said something different”.
8. You seem to end up spending most of your time all by your self, but can’t find a way to change this.

Can you identify with any of the above-mentioned scenarios? If your answer is yes to most of these, then it is a definite indication that you are shy. But relax; there is no need to panic! As we have mentioned before, you can definitely get over your shyness if you put your shoulder to the wheel and go on trying single-mindedly.

There are a several gestures that convey shyness. Expressions of shyness are like its characteristics. The only exception is that the expressions are quite prompt. The most common ways through which shyness is expressed by people include:

In the way they speak

Commonly shy people are very reserved. They draw back from taking part in conversations. They will speak up only when they are spoken to, and restrict their replies to monosyllabic words. Inbred behavioral patterns in social situations for example

smiling, easily coming up with suitable topics for conversation, taking up a relaxed carriage and building good eye contact – traits that come artlessly in the average person, may require struggling or become totally unachievable for a shy person.

In their postures and facial expressions

Shy persons rarely are capable of making direct eye contact while speaking. Their body language tends to be somewhat defensive and beseeching.

In their attitude and physical sensations

Shyness affects a person's feelings. They feel either fear or hesitation about acting in a normal way. They tend to be uncommunicative. They go through a higher level of anxiety than is normal. In cases of fear, their heart races, they become breathless, speechless, and shaky. A crippling numbness spreads over them. Matters are worsened by the dread of evaluation by others at the time of social performing. This all consuming fear paralyzes them and hampers their normal functioning. If they experience self-consciousness, they go through physical sensations like feeling flushed, and hide their bashfulness by speaking too fast, unintelligibly, and stammering.

Loneliness

Shy people are lonesome.

Notice that in all these aspects of shyness, communication and social skills are the foremost features that get affected.

Chapter 3: What Causes Shyness



The key to triumphing over any setback becomes simple as soon as you make out the reason behind the setback. Shyness is no different. To overcome it, you have to understand why you suffer from it. So, let's have a look at:

The roots of shyness

Fear of trying out new things

Be it a new job, a new state of affairs, unfamiliar persons, or a new locality. Similar to most behavioral patterns, shyness has its roots in a shy person's infancy, at about the time when the kid is exposed to new people, unknown relatives or friends. It is at this time when a kid learns to communicate with strangers. Some kids take a liking to new faces and in fact show interest, while others just

retract and build up shyness.

A fear of people

In addition to this fear, lies the fear of negative criticism. For shy people, meeting some one new can be harrowing only because they are scared about how they are perceived. "A new person" can be:

1. Strangers encountered at the office or at societal location
2. Members of the opposite sex.
3. Authorities in the place of work or in the educational institution.

This happens because shy people often have a negative self image.

A fear of situations

The level of shyness usually rises with formal situations. This is because a certain 'code of conduct' or decorum has to be obeyed at formal occasions. Shy people worry about saying or doing the wrong thing. As a result, they end up acting clumsily.

Occasions when such a fear strikes: Too much social attention

It is your moment. Every eye is turned on you. And you freeze. You feel inadequate. To add to your discomfiture, you end up committing some faux pas, which only increases your awareness of your shortfalls.

This often stems from humiliating experiences in the past, in the childhood. Being bullied or teased by peers or siblings can make a person retreat into a shell. Such occurrences distort the sense of ‘self’ that is being formed.

Too little attention

At times, too little attention from others can lead to a feeling of being rejected. You feel left out, and do not feel like you belong. As a result, you feel as if you are deficient in something, and later this sense of lacking makes you afraid of opening up in society.

The fear of being judged negatively

This perhaps ranks the highest among the fears felt by shy people. Is it not often that you find yourself thinking, “Oh my god, why did I say such a stupid thing? They will definitely laugh at me” or may be, “Why did I tell him about my mistakes? He must be thinking what a stupid person I am!”

Low self esteem

The inferior your assessment of yourself, the lesser will be your desire of freely mixing with others. Your self image will be poorer, you will deem yourself absolutely dull. And you will start to believe that every one else see you in the same light. As expected, you will stay away from meeting new people. Often the causes of this behavior are silent and imperceptible, that occurs in the childhood, when the ‘self’ is taking shape.

When one or both parents are extremely aggressive

In such cases, a child starts considering everybody as potentially hostile. Thus they become intimidated by certain situations.

A critical family

When a child grows up in a family full of critical people, who fail to nurture its positive qualities and harp on its negative traits instead, the child tends to draw back into a cocoon. When the family, instead of expressing joy in its accomplishments continuously expresses disapproval, the child becomes unsure of its capacities. Thus it grows up expecting everyone to judge them negatively.

Unaffectionate Families

Lack of expression of tender feelings, love and care by close relatives when a child is growing up can contribute to shyness.

Learned behavior

A person's natural tendency towards shyness can be influenced by what they have learned from others, especially close relatives. When the parents are shy and find socializing unnerving, their actions end up inadvertently teaching the child to consider socializing as unpleasant.

Effects of shyness

Isolation is not a desired state for shy persons. They choose to be alone simply because the other option is extremely terrifying for them. They are terrified of being humiliated in public, and their poor self-image makes them believe that they will invariably be humiliated if they try to break out of their shell. It is not that they dislike being the cynosure of all eyes but their fear makes them stay isolated.

Some of the consequences and long-term effects of shyness

Boredom

Boredom is a state of mind that can be kept at bay by trying out new things, let your hair down once in a while and be adventurous. But these involve coming in contact with unfamiliar things, and so shy people are likely to avoid them.

Dysfunctionality

Shyness can cause difficulty making and maintaining close personal relationships. Shy people lack the social skills necessary for making friends. Moreover, they are often fearful of social situations, and hence avoid them. As a result, they become lonely.

Loneliness leading to bitterness

In the long run, a shy person narrows down his world and end up leading a solitary life. They close the doors to opportunities that could make their lives more interesting and fulfilling. This creates bitterness. Ultimately they may start indulging in vicarious pleasures.

Lack of assertiveness

Shy people fail to stick up for themselves, both in the workplace as well as in personal matters. Hence, they are often exploited by peers.

Problem in effective communication

Evading social situations make shy people grow up into adults lacking effective communication skills. They do not possess the power of expressing their emotions. They fail to relate to others. Their shyness may be misinterpreted as aloofness and they come across as stuck up.

Academic impediment

Shyness makes a child fail to ask for help from their teachers, even when they need to clear their doubts on the subject being taught. This leads to poor grades and overall poor performance in school. The long-term effect may be hindrance in advancing in career.

Chapter 4: How to get rid of your Shyness

“For every thousand hacking at the leaves of evil, there is one hacking at the root”, believed American writer Thoreau.

Sure, you can beat shyness. Only, you need to change your way of thinking, your philosophy of life. No achievement is easy. But of course, if you can strike at the root of a problem, you can fix it.

This chapter will show you how to get straight to the heart of the problem and solve it in five simply steps.

Step 1: Know yourself



The first step towards understanding the problem is to understand some basic facts about your own self.

Self Image

Every one has a self image, and so do you. It is the way you see yourself, the opinion that you have of yourself. Right now, it is far removed from what you really are. What you have to do is this: Get a clearer perception of your personality and character.

Attitude

The old adage goes – “You can take the horse to the river but you can’t make it drink the water”. Similarly, in order to change, you must have the desire to change. And this implies a change in your mind-set. This change must be a real target that you want to reach, and not just a vague aspiration.

Viewpoint

As has been mentioned before, one of the leading causes of shyness is the fear of judgment. In most cases, this fear is rooted in your viewpoint. You view people as judgmental and think they are appraising you disapprovingly.

Shy people have a different perception of the world and their opinions are based on their own perceptions. Such opinions, often distorted, govern their behavior. As Covey put it,

“We must look at the lens through which we see the world as well as the world we see, and that the lens itself shapes how we interpret the world.” Thus we see a sea-change in perception is necessary.

Step 2: Recognize the problem

Ahead of working on the solution, we should try to spot the problem and the foundation of it. Here’s an exercise to help you identify both.

Bring to mind a Social Situation that left you embarrassed in the recent past

Do you remember the last time you made a blunder at a party?

Are you scared of repeating that blunder?

So what was the nature of your ‘blunder’?

- a. You said something that embarrassed you, something inappropriate.
- b. You acted clumsily, and spilled something while eating.
- c. You could no speak at all.

Now that you have recognized the problem, let us go ahead towards the solution

Step 3: Examine your fear-provoking ideas

The circumstances

This could be any social situation. It could be the office where you work, a social gathering, a personal contact between two people, anything.

The proof confirming the fear

These are the proofs that establish that your fears are not baseless. Say for example, you have a notion that you are a lousy public speaker. How did you form this opinion? Have you ever tried talking in public before? Did it lead to something bad? Why was it bad? Was it because of any of your fault, or were there some other reasons behind it? The answer to this answer will tell you whether your fears are baseless or have a concrete foundation.

Let us take the case of this girl named Stella. She had an idea that her boss did not like her. One day she made a particularly good presentation. Her boss praised her and pointed out ways by which she could better her performance even more. Stella was overwhelmed. She perceived her boss’s pointers as criticisms of her performance. When we interrogated her closely, she acknowledged that her boss had also praised her quite a lot. After some more questioning, she admitted that the suggestions for improvement were mentioned only in passing.

The flip side of the problem

Jeff once cracked a joke at a party in front of a colleague. But the colleague paid no attention. Jeff now believes that he is not funny and had a sordid sense of humor. How did he become so sure? He never asked his colleague why he did not laugh. Isn't it possible that the colleague was preoccupied, or had a trying day? Can't it be that the colleague was simply tired and missed whatever Jeff said? We asked Jeff to go talk to the colleague. He found out that his colleague indeed had a really bad day at the office and was not in a mood to laugh.

Now that you have remembered your last social blunder that left you embarrassed, sit and think:

1. Think about the way you felt.
2. Think about the entire event.
3. What exactly were your feelings after the event took place? Upset, angry, guilty, ashamed, sorry for yourself – what was your exact emotion?
4. Identify what you thought and the negative message you gave yourself – Did you make any statement like “I’ll never” or “I should have”?

Now replace these negative messages with more positive beliefs about yourself – these are called ‘affirmations’

Examples:

"I can get over my shyness."

"I can make a slip while chatting with unknown people and even then make new friends."

"I can be at ease and hold a discussion at meetings."

Aren't you feeling better already?

Common Mistaken Beliefs held by Shy People

- ✓ “If I talk to a stranger I shall say something that would embarrass me, so it is better that I do not speak at all”
Counterargument: Are you a psychic, how can you forecast the future? How do you know whatever you will say will embarrass you? Avoiding speaking is not the solution. Instead, practice speaking as much as possible, the more you try, the better you will get at socializing.
- ✓ “I simply don't know what to say when I have to take part in a conversation”
Counterargument: Do you just have to say the “right” thing at all times? How do you know, what is right? Isn't it better if you just expressed your opinion and set the ball rolling for a nice well-rounded conversation?
- ✓ "No body is interested in listening to what I have to say."
Counterargument: do you have the capacity to read minds? There just might be someone who shares the same viewpoints as you do and would be interested in getting to know more about you.
- ✓ "Every one will rebuff me and I will fail to deal with this rejection."
Counterargument: do not undermine your own capacities. Of course you can

practice and learn to tackle rejection. Use rejection to improve your zeal for attaining success.

The underlying idea is that you need to apply your thoughts positively. Overcoming shyness is mostly about effectively eliminating negative attitude. Negatively criticizing yourself makes situations that already induce anxiety in you snowball into a huge complications. You should not believe the worst about yourself without any tangible evidence. Remember, there is every possibility of the existence of extraneous reasons behind a certain act in a certain situation.

The worst possible outcome of a situation

Next, jot down the worst-case scenarios that may come about through what you do or what you say:

- ✓ “They might laugh at me”
- ✓ “I may never be invited again”
- ✓ “They will find me abominable”
- ✓ “I will say the wrong thing and embarrass myself”.

The list goes on. Don’t you think, you have absolutely no way to find out whether what you are thinking will really come to pass unless you actually do it?

After you have pin-pointed your fear, go ahead and actually act out your worst-case scenario.

Example:

Suppose you are attracted to your neighbor Jane. What might happen if you ask Jane out? Suppose you ask Jane for a date. The worst-case scenario, she might reject. What will happen as a result of it? You will feel awkward next time you come across her. You may think that the whole world has come to know about what has passed between you two and is laughing at you behind your back. What of it? In the long run, you will get over her and forget about the whole thing. Then, every thing will get back to normal. So, how bad your worst possible outcome of the situation “Ask Jane for a date” really was? It was not much, was it?

Step 4 Handle fear-provoking ideas

By now, you must have recognized your problem and scrutinized it. Your next action should be to prepare for the circumstances that trigger your fears. Now go ahead, and boldly face it!

Afterwards, sit back and dissect the outcome of the situation. How bad was it? Was it as bad as you thought it would be, or was it worse? Wasn’t it actually somewhat less severe than what you thought it might be? Hasn’t one or most of your friends been in a similar situation at some point in their lives? How did they handle it?

Avoid avoidance, you'll survive it

1. Picture a completely embarrassing act. Say, talking to a baby watched by a horde of strangers. Baby talk may well be utterly embarrassing. Now go ahead and do it. See for yourself. The end results do not actually match with what your thoughts predicted to you.
2. Accept rejection as a part of life. If you face a setback in a certain situation, try something new instead.
3. Praise yourself for making the effort. Reward your efforts, not the outcome. Other people's reactions to us are beyond your control. Yet, we tend to define our achievements and downers through people's responses. If you smile and they smile back, very well. But if they don't, you are not responsible for it. Sure, you can scrutinize on your effort and contemplate about ways by which you can better your performance next time. But right at this moment, you made an effort and pat yourself on the back for it. You can even give yourself a treat!
5. Steel yourself for meeting several new people and try them out as potential friends before you find a lasting bond. Finding a real connection with someone is rare, every one just has to face some sour experiences in their quest. So don't be put off if you try to break out of your shell and are rebuffed the first time.
6. Mentally shift into a self-assured gear by acting like someone whose social grace you admire. May be you find it embarrassing to speak with an attractive member of the opposite sex. A simple remark, like "How are you doing?" could make you blush and feel all eyes are riveted at you, waiting to hear your reply. And you stutter. Now try acting like you are not shy. Next time some one 'cute' asks you something, reply boldly and see how they and every one else react. You will see that every body reacts totally normally.

Logical flaws

Can you think of ANY one who is absolutely perfect? Nobody is. So cut yourself some slack, don't be such a hard task-master with yourself. Remember, everyone, even the best of statesmen, performers, comedians, and socialites have made some horrendous faux pas at some point or the other. But every body remembers them for their virtues, not their gaffes. So in the long run, it's all right to make mistakes from time to time.

Besides, never judge a situation when you are feeling depressed. The way you think when you feel low is very different from the way you think at other times.

Step 5 Rate yourself

Finally, now that you have completed all the exercises, it is time to assess yourself. Be your own critic, don't hesitate to be a little hard on yourself. This will give a boost to your performance.

Chapter 5: Weapons to fight shyness



The skills that will come in handy in your battle against shyness are Interpersonal and Social skills. This has two stages:

Social skills acquisition

This is invaluable for people who have no idea about such skills.

Social skills practice:

This is meant for those persons who know the skills but did not have the proper guidance for executing these.

Here are a few of the most typical situations we face in our day-to-day life. We present some pointers for you to help you hone your social skills and use them in such situations.

Exercise 1

The art of conversations and taking part in a group discussion

When you wish to enter a group of people in order to take part in the conversation, the first thing to do is to stand on the periphery and listen attentively. Try to figure out whether it is a serious discussion or a friendly banter. After a while, get in and take a position where you can be heard as well as hear what is being said. Do not linger at the

periphery for too long, but do not try to gain the centre stage all at once. Get a good grasp of what is being discussed, the context and the references. Then, if you feel you have a fitting comment to make, look for the right moment and speak up.

Hints

Every time you are asked to a get-together or party, try to do groundwork on the other guests on the list. In every social attendance, there are some people who find it hard to open up, while some are the life and soul of the party. Ensure that your remarks are open-ended, questions that allow the conversation to flow.

Here's an illustration of a close-ended dialogue

Example:

“Hi! Nice party! “

“Yes”

“The host is very friendly”

“Yes”

“Having a nice time?”

“Yes”

This conversation is going nowhere. At some point of time, either of the two is going to lose interest and move away. If you are the one who put in the first observation, in an attempt to strike up a conversation, you might feel that you are the one who's at fault. But it could also be that the other person is in an off-mood and not feeling like speaking beyond monosyllables.

Do not leave home without rehearsing Conversation Topics. People who have the gift of the gab can hold people's interest because:

- a) They go to a lot of places, do many interesting things, such that they are never at a loss for topics to talk about.
- b) They prepare topics of discussion.

They think of something to say to the people who they are going to meet that day. While going to a party, they try to keep in mind topics that would interest the other guests, especially when they know who would be attending. Before going to work, they plan how they would represent their weekend revelries to their colleagues. They keep up-to-date on the current affairs, at least have something ready to say about the weather, any thing to keep up the small-talk.

So before you leave home today, cook up a good many conversation starters.

The art of complimenting

- Take care that the compliment does NOT sound vague. Example: After a spectacular speech: “You've done it again!” – This does not convey anything.

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- The compliment should not have a negative tone
Example: “I never thought you will give such a brilliant speech.”
- Keep it short and sweet. While framing a compliment, highlight the receiver’s merits.

Mary always fumbled when it came to complimenting people. At times she would come up with self-deprecating statements: “I’m a horrible speaker, but you are so wonderful at speeches.”

The effect of such a comment would invariably be that the receiver, instead of feeling good about the accolade, would shift their focus on consoling her. She practiced the exercises outlined here, and now she has become an expert in the art of complimenting. Now she clearly understands the response mechanism. First she appraises the person and then pays a compliment based on their strengths, keeping her statement short and sweet. For example, “Oh, your speech was wonderful!”. This instantly makes the receiver warm up to her.

The art of saying no

Shy people are often not assertive. They fail to refuse, or express their wish. Thus they frequently wind up doing something they would rather not. This adds to their dissatisfaction and feelings of insignificance.

Hints

- ✓ Be straightforward. Never beat around the bush.
- ✓ Just say no. Don’t supply excuses.
- ✓ Clearly state why you are refusing, and give a sound reason.
- ✓ You do not need to apologize for refusing to do something you do not want to.

Practice! Practice! Practice!

To perfect your skills, you need to practice them constantly. Take your friends into confidence. Test your skills in front of your close pals, who know and understand your problem. Take their feedback and be open to new ideas for improvement.

Select a testing ground where you feel that whatever be the outcome, it won’t affect you too much. This will lessen your nervousness. Plan ahead, write down what you want to say beforehand. Try out your plans at the test spot. Assess your performance in this first practice test, then look for scopes of improvement.

To sum it up, here are the things that you need to do:

- ✓ **Acquire and apply social skills.** When you go to school, learn a new subject, you practice it at home repeatedly. Only then you feel confident at the time of appearing for a test, isn’t it? Similarly, don’t shy away from socializing, practice

social behaviors. Practice good eye contact, smiling warmly, confident body language, topics for small talk, and soliciting queries with those you are most at ease. This will help increase your confidence.

- ✓ **Choose one social skill to put into practice at a time.** There is no need to turn into a social butterfly all at once. Focus your attention on one particular skill, something simple like smiling or greeting new people, practice for a week or for a month, then move on to the next one. This will build a strong foundation to your skills.
- ✓ **Plan ahead.** Have you been avoiding something for quite some time? Try it out, but first write down all you want to say on a piece of paper. Go over it loudly, stand in front of the mirror if you want. Then go ahead and do it. You may not do it perfectly, but that's okay. At least you tried! Next time, it will be easier for you, and thus you'll do better.
- ✓ **Befriend yourself.** Stop being concerned with how others view you, tune out of the likelihood of negative judgment. Don't be too hard on yourself, it's perfectly all right not to be perfect. Do you criticize the person you love most for the same things you condemn yourself? Try to modify your outer behavior to come across as a confident person, to cope better with situations we face in life. Focus on your good qualities and strengths. Accept your imperfections, after all, if everyone became absolutely perfect, things would become quite monotonous, isn't it?
- ✓ **Build up your assertiveness.** May be you are too concerned with how others will react, and feel you will cause trouble. So you do not speak up for yourself even when you should. Boldly ask for what you want, tell people when they are overstepping boundaries. Assertiveness is not rudeness. It builds self-respect.

Relax your mind

A relaxed mind helps overcome shyness. When you are relaxed, there is no way you can feel anxious. Hence, to increase your comfort in social situations, learn some relaxing techniques.

Useful Relaxation techniques:

1) Learn relaxation exercises like deep-breathing.

- ✓ Practice in quiet surroundings.
- ✓ Get rid of all distracting thoughts. Chant a single word, if possible, a single-syllable word, like "Oum!"
- ✓ Hold an inert stance. Let repose come over you. Position yourself comfortably, either lie down on your favorite couch or sit in a comfortable chair. Total body support is vital.

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- ✓ Close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhaling through your nose, hold it for a second, and then release it very slowly to a count of four. You will instantly feel tranquil.
- ✓ While you exhale, loosen up your body and feel the support on every part of it. Look for tension in any part, and if you find any, try to let it go away.

Visualize a scene

While you use the relaxation techniques, try to visualize with a positive outlook the exact experience or situation in which you want to feel relaxed. Do this repeatedly, it is very effective.

Alternatively, you may sit quietly and picture in your mind some place where you feel extremely relaxed. In your imagination, take in all the sights, sounds, smells and the like of that place. While you do this, continue deep-breathing and tranquilizing the tense parts of your body. Use this strategy ahead of meeting someone you do not know, asking for a date, attending a meeting, and all such situations that normally make you panicky.

Pointers for winning over shyness:

- ✓ Exhibit a genuine interest in the person to whom you are talking. Help them open up, encourage them to speak about themselves, their likes and dislikes, their opinions and experiences. Keep in mind any funny anecdote or interesting information they come up with.
- ✓ Recount those anecdotes at another social gathering.
- ✓ Make the extra effort to help people feel comfortable. Once people start feeling comfortable with you, they will automatically take you into their trusted circle.
- ✓ Shift your attention on the event you are attending, do not be over-conscious about your shyness and drawbacks. Relax and start enjoying yourself, and you will see your discomfiture melt away!

Summary

Shyness is a behavioral condition. It originates from sensitivity. A timid and introverted person looks at the world in a light different from others. He/she envisages that every one is judging him/her all the time, evaluating his/her every action and giving him/her negative scores. This is even more pronounced at the time of social interactions. As a result, the shy person withdraws into a shell, becomes reserved and ham-fisted. In due course, they end up very feeling alone forlorn. Extreme cases of shyness can result in dysfunctional families and collapse of relationships.

Here we have elucidated the causes of shyness and shown how to overcome it in a few easy steps. Changes may not occur overnight, but once you start trying, you will definitely see a progress. Take proactive steps, and in no time you will grow to be a self-assured, assertive human being.

Quiz yourself

Find out how shy you are:

Use the following scale to rate your answers;

1. Write "0" next to the question if the answer is "no way."
2. Write "1" next to the question if the answer is "rarely."
3. Write "2" next to the question if the answer is "now and then."
4. Write "3" next to the question if the answer is "frequently."
5. Write "4" next to the question if the answer is "all the time."

This is not exactly a scientific record, but it may possibly assist you identify the exact problems you face due to shyness.

1. Do you feel nervous when you are introduced to people?
2. Do you get tongue-tied when you need to talk or express your opinion, especially in an unfamiliar place amidst unknown people?
3. Do you have to put in great efforts to keep a conversation rolling?
4. Do you stutter and stumble when trying to hold a dialogue with a stranger?
5. How frequently do you come across people with whom you share common interests?
6. Can you talk freely to people with whom you have common interests?
7. Do you every so often hesitate even when you know the exact thing to say?
8. Do you remember something interesting to say after the moment for you to speak has gone?
9. Do you ever feel left out and abandoned when amidst a group of acquaintances?
10. Do you get vibes that people regard you as too glum or quiet?
11. Do you shrink from parties because you regularly end up sitting all alone?
12. Do you feel culpable when you act like an extrovert – as if you are being fake, or not putting across the person you really are?
13. Do you fumble and have stammer when everybody is looking at you?
14. Do you admire expressive, confident-sounding voice in others and wish you had one too?
15. Do you fall short of smiling or laughing at every available opportunity?
16. Do you ever stand awkwardly and look uptight in social gatherings?
17. Do you feel you fail to make as much eye contact as you should?
18. Do you very few friends and have trouble finding new ones?

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19. Do you want to go on more dates instead of staying at home as many times as you normally do?
20. Does the idea of conversing with a member of the opposite sex cause you nervousness?
21. Do you fret while talking to an attractive of the opposite gender?
22. Do you have difficulty in asserting yourself when you feel you are being exploited?
23. Do you have trouble thinking of a comeback line when somebody makes a wisecrack or smart-alecky remark at your expense?
24. Does asking for a favor sound like impossibility to you?
25. Do you find it difficult to refuse requests of you for errands?
26. Do you have trouble paying or receiving compliments?
27. Do you ward off compliments?
28. Do you from time to time fail to end a conversation with poise?
29. Do you consider that trying to talk more will increase your chances of making slip ups and embarrassing yourself, so it's better to stay quiet and let people presume that you know more than you actually do?
30. Do you want to be amusing?

So, how do you fare?

- 0-30** Marvelous! You can vie with the whole world.
- 30-60** An excellent score. You are absolutely confident.
- 60-100** You are shy for sure. Develop your confidence.
- 100-120** An uncommon score, but it's not singular. Take the first step of change today.