



The Roots of Social Anxiety ^[1]

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According to recent statistics, about 3 in 100 people of all races and social groups are affected by social anxiety. Since it's so common, researchers have turned their attention to this condition. After almost 70 years of research, scientists believe to have finally discovered the roots of social anxiety.

In this article, we're going to present the most common explanations for social anxiety. It might sound complicated right now but rest assured that you are about to be provided with simple, easy-to-understand information. By knowing what exactly causes you to behave in an anxious manner, you'll gain valuable insights about this condition. The success of this treatment plan depends on how well you understand the nature of social anxiety.

The Legacy of Our Ancestors

Thousands of years ago, people started living in large organized groups known as civilizations. This is what gave us a competitive edge. Unlike other species from the animal kingdom, we were able to exercise a better control over resources and watch each other's backs. But things were not as good as you might think. Unlike today, the primitive society was often a dangerous place, even for its own members. You could be attacked by other individuals, robbed of your possessions or even killed. Being around other people (especially strangers) posed a significant threat.

Staying Home Might Have Been Safer

In order to increase your chances of survival, one useful strategy was to stay inside your home. This is the reason why some experts believe that social anxiety was actually an adaptive response that we passed on from one generation to another. People who chose to avoid large groups had better chances of survival by staying away from trouble. Unfortunately, what worked well in the past is completely useless in our modern society. Today, it's literally impossible to survive on your own. You need the help of others and social anxiety is preventing you from getting it.

Ghosts of the Past

Some researchers believe that social anxiety is actually a learned behavior. In other words, we become socially anxious by observing and interacting with other people who experience

this problem.

Sometimes, the biggest fears and worries are not actually ours. Overprotective parents and other caregivers can 'imprint' their personal struggles on us. If you grow up in a world depicted as dangerous, you'll eventually integrate this assumption as a universal truth.

How Children Learn to be Anxious

Children are not always capable of distinguishing between safe and unsafe. If you're a child and your dad tells you that going to the park all by yourself is dangerous, you'll simply take him at his word. Some parents choose to accompany their children, everywhere they go. If you were one of these children, the chances of discovering the world all by yourself were close to 0. Given the circumstances, it's absolutely normal to feel anxious every time you step foot into a new restaurant, store or any other place.

Create Your Own Experiences

There comes a time when one must take a 'leap of faith' and experience the world through his/her own eyes. It's that 'sink or swim' moment when we put our social skills to the test. It might be the first day you take the bus all by yourself, or the first teenage party that you attend. Unfortunately, some of us were raised in a bubble, completely stripped of any opportunity to interact with others in an unrestricted manner.

Misunderstanding Failure

Social anxiety doesn't appear out of the blue. You don't just wake up one day feeling scared and not wanting to attend a meeting or go to the mall with your friends. For some of us, social anxiety is the result of repeated failure and public shaming. Maybe it began in elementary school, when your teacher embarrassed you in front of everyone for giving the wrong answer. From that point on, you chose to keep your mouth shut because it's impossible to embarrass yourself in front of others if you don't say anything.

Everybody Makes Mistakes

As we discussed in our previous articles, anxious individuals are extremely concerned that other people might notice their lack of social skills. On top of that, they don't want to embarrass themselves like they did in the past, so they simply choose to give up. Oftentimes, those of us who deal with social anxiety fail to understand that everybody makes mistakes. It's all part of being a normal human being. Failure is an opportunity to learn and grow.

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