

Confidence Builder – Social Anxiety

Find a place to sit where you won't have distractions. Get comfortable and gently close your eyes. Give yourself this time to focus and relax. First, scan your body for any areas of tension. Scan your forehead...jaw...neck...shoulders... back... arms.... hands...stomach...legs...and feet. If you do feel tension, in any parts of your body, try to send your breath to that area and let go of the tension.

Now focus on the gentle inhalation and exhalation of your breath. In...and out... If any worries or unwanted images come into your mind during this exercise, just let them be, and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Create a picture in your mind of a situation where you are around others. Perhaps there are people you don't know very well or complete strangers. It could be at school, a party, or any situation that has made you feel nervous in the past.

Begin to imagine that you are feeling comfortable in this situation. You are speaking to others with a steady voice. You are looking them in the eyes and smiling. Your shoulders are back and your chest is up. You are asking different people questions about themselves. They are smiling back at you and engaging you in conversation. They are interested in getting to know you. You feel good sharing things about yourself.

Notice your slow, steady heart rate. Notice your steady hands and your smooth voice. It feels good to imagine yourself speaking to others with ease and confidence. And enjoying the freedom that comes from not caring so much about what others think.

You can practice facing social situations, first in your imagination, and then in real life. You can use your imagination to help you rehearse acting confident. Right now, start to imagine a challenging social situation you might face in the near future. Picture as many details as you can. Where are you? Who is around you? What are you doing?

Picture the 'confident self' you were imagining a few moments ago, and see yourself facing this situation. See yourself overcoming your shyness and anxiety.

It's okay if you feel nervous or self-conscious. These feelings will start to lessen as you face this situation head on and you see that you are handling yourself well. You are stronger and more capable than you realize.

Now, you can start to build this 'confident you'. Allow this inner confidence to grow inside of you. And enjoy how good it feels to connect in meaningful ways with others.

Take a moment to take a mental snapshot of this 'confident you'. Any time you need to face a social situation where you feel anxious or worried about what others are thinking, recall this confident self that you have created.

You may find that slowly, over time, you feel more motivated to face new social situations. You may choose to speak to someone new and you may find that you feel more confident and less self-conscious and worried about what others are thinking. It does feel good to conquer your fears, and to face challenging situations.

Now, slowly begin to return your awareness to the present. Wiggle your fingers...your toes. Feel your hands and arms waking up...feel your body waking up. Gently open your eyes and bring yourself back to this present moment. You are ready to return to your day feeling calm and confident.