WORKSHEET 70 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Social anxiety: where does my attention go?

Self-focused attention and safety behaviours

AIM

Help the person spot, in social situations, the excessive attention focused on themselves and the safety behaviours that maintain social anxiety, and test the effect of reducing them.

WHO IT IS FOR

Social anxiety, shyness that holds you back, fear of other people's judgement.

DURATION

20 min in session; experiments between sessions

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Explore a recent social situation: what was the person paying attention to (their face, their voice, their hands)?
2. List the safety behaviours (preparing sentences, avoiding eye contact, saying little, hiding behind the phone).
3. Show how they maintain the anxiety and may even come across as cold to others.
4. Suggest an experiment: the same situation with attention directed outwards and without safety behaviours, and compare.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Go step by step and choose low-stakes situations. Intense social anxiety deserves structured support, which is usually very effective.

REFERENCES

Clark, D. M. & Wells, A. (1995). A cognitive model of social phobia. In R. G. Heimberg, M. R. Liebowitz, D. A. Hope & F. R. Schneier (Eds.), Social Phobia: Diagnosis, Assessment, and Treatment (pp. 69-93). Guilford.

Clark, D. A. & Beck, A. T. (2010). Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice. Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 70 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Where does my attention go in company?

In social anxiety, attention turns inwards ("I'm blushing, I must look stupid") and you protect yourself (preparing sentences, avoiding eye contact). Those protections keep the anxiety going. You can test what happens when you turn your attention towards other people.

1. The social situation: _____
2. What I was paying attention to (in myself): _____
3. What I did to protect myself: _____
4. The experiment: the same situation, attention outwards, without protection. What happened.

Situation	Attention on myself /10	Protections used	Anxiety /10	What I noticed

What changes when I look at others instead of at myself?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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