

Social Anxiety Experience Inventory

This exploratory questionnaire describes social anxiety, or social phobia, through the situations feared (performance and interaction), the fear of negative evaluation, and the processes that maintain it: self-focused attention, safety behaviors and avoidance, anticipation, and rumination afterward. It helps build a case formulation based on the cognitive model of social anxiety and choose treatment targets, such as exposure, dropping safety behaviors, or shifting attention outward.

Number of questions	24 questions
Estimated duration	6 minutes
Language	English
Original name	Social Anxiety Experience Inventory
Target audience	Adults
Category	Phobias, Anxiety

Preview of the 24 questions

Over the past month, how often has this been true for you?

When attention turns to me, I want to hide.

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often

Over the past month, how often has this been true for you?

Starting a conversation with someone I don't know well intimidates me.

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often

Over the past month, how often has this been true for you?

I'm afraid of boring the people I'm talking to.

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often

Over the past month, how often has this been true for you?

During a conversation, I monitor my facial expression, my voice, or my gestures.

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often

Over the past month, how often has this been true for you?

I rehearse in my head what I'm going to say, even for a simple conversation.

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often

Administer your questionnaires online

Send your patient a link: they answer from their phone or computer, and you receive the scored results by email.

View the questionnaire on mentaal.org ›

Scoring & interpretation

Scoring

Each statement is scored from 0 (never) to 4 (very often) based on its frequency over the past month. Each domain combines 4 statements spread throughout the questionnaire, giving a score from 0 to 16.

Reading the profile

There is no total score. Domains are ranked from most to least elevated, each with a description of what it covers and points to explore in the interview. The "Performance situations" and "Interaction situations" domains show the range of situations feared: anxiety limited to performance is not treated the same way as anxiety that also affects ordinary interactions. The other domains describe the core fear and what maintains it according to Clark and Wells's model (self-focused attention, safety behaviors, anticipation and rumination), which are direct targets of cognitive behavioral therapy.

Clinical cautions

Widespread avoidance can lower the scores of the "Performance situations" and "Interaction situations" domains: the less the person exposes themselves, the less anxiety they feel in those situations. The statement about alcohol calls for exploring drinking, and associated depressed mood should be looked for. Social difficulties without fear of judgment point instead to other hypotheses, such as autistic characteristics or depressive withdrawal.

Limitations

This exploratory questionnaire has not undergone psychometric validation and has no cutoffs. It supports the clinical interview and does not provide a diagnosis.

Scoring example

Scoring

Interaction situations 10 / 16

Anxiety in interactions: approaching someone one does not know well, joining a group, keeping a conversation going, making phone calls.

Areas to explore: the relationships affected (coworkers, friends, dating), the interactions that are still easy and with whom, missed opportunities.

See also: LSAS.

Fear of negative evaluation 7 / 16

Fear of what others might think of oneself: seeming boring, ridiculous, or incompetent, being laughed at or rejected.

Areas to explore: the impression the person fears making, what they fear will happen next (rejection, mockery, humiliation), the experiences that fed this fear (teasing, bullying, criticism).

See also: SPIN.

Safety behaviors and avoidance 7 / 16

What the person does to protect themselves during a situation or to escape it: preparing, staying in the background, drinking to get through it, canceling.

Areas to explore: safety behaviors and what they are supposed to prevent, the situations avoided, alcohol or other substances used to cope.

See also: LSAS, SPIN.

Performance situations 6 / 16

Anxiety in situations where one acts under other people's gaze or evaluation: being the center of attention, being watched, being evaluated, speaking up in front of a group.

Areas to explore: the situations feared and their hierarchy, what the person fears will happen, the impact on school or work.

See also: LSAS.

Self-focused attention 6 / 16

Attention turned inward during interactions: monitoring one's signs of anxiety (blushing, sweating, voice), imagining the impression one is making, at the expense of what is happening with the other person.

Areas to explore: the self-image that appears in the situation, the physical signs monitored and what the person believes others see of them, what they notice about the people they are talking to.

Anticipation and rumination 5 / 16

Apprehension before social situations and going back over them afterward, focused on what may have gone wrong.

Areas to explore: the time spent dreading or going back over interactions, memories of humiliating moments that come back, the conclusions the person draws about themselves.

No validated clinical or psychometric cutoffs have been established for this test yet. The results should therefore be considered exploratory indicators, meant to support the clinical interview, not diagnostic findings.

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 Emily T. - Online CBT Psychologist