



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Social Anxiety Disorder Groups

Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is a persistent, disproportionate fear of being observed, evaluated, or judged. Not shyness, but dread of embarrassing yourself in front of others, with avoidance that slowly shrinks a life. Group therapy is uniquely suited to it: the group itself is the feared social situation. The most studied approach is Cognitive Behavioral Group Therapy (CBGT), which pairs cognitive restructuring with in-session exposure.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- An excellent fit if you'll engage in graduated exposure, including speaking and role-plays.
- If avoidance is so severe a group feels impossible, individual CBT first may suit better.
- Trauma-driven anxiety or impairing depression may need other care first.
If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

What it's for

A primary diagnosis of SAD, performance-only or generalized across most situations.

Also significant social anxiety that impairs life without meeting full criteria.

And avoidant personality, or social anxiety alongside depression or other anxiety.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- 1 Sessions run 90 minutes to 2.5 hours, depending on the protocol.
- 2 Check-in, cognitive work on an anxious prediction, then an in-session exposure role-play.
- 3 Exposures are graduated: lower-stakes first, then the situations you fear most.

Group CBT for social anxiety has a well-established evidence base.

- A 2013 meta-analysis found **large effects** for group CBT on social anxiety symptoms versus control, well maintained at follow-up.¹
- A 2024 review of 136 studies (nearly 9,000 people) confirmed CBT as the most effective treatment, with group CBT comparable to individual.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Do the exposures. Speaking and role-plays are where it works.

Stay past the urge. Anxiety drops if you don't escape.

Give it a few sessions. Early dread is expected.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1 Who leads the group, and are they trained in CBGT for SAD?
- 2 How many sessions, and is it a closed cohort?
- 3 What does it cost? Is there a sliding scale or no-cost option?

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Sources

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- 1 Wersebe, H., Sijbrandij, M., & Cuijpers, P. Psychological group-treatments of social anxiety disorder: a meta-analysis. PLoS ONE (2013), 8(11), Article e79034.
- 2 de Ponti, N., Matbouriahi, M., Franco, P., et al. The efficacy of psychotherapy for social anxiety disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Journal of Anxiety Disorders (2024), 104, Article 102881.

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The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact.