

Helpful Guides

How to make friends when you have **Social Anxiety**

Discover helpful tips and easy steps to make friends even if you have social anxiety in this friendly guide. Learn how to create a supportive group of people and enjoy socializing in a way that respects your needs, so you can build lasting friendships in an inclusive and welcoming way.



Making friends when you have social anxiety can feel very challenging. It can be tempting to avoid social situations because of the anxiety that they lead to, and it's always important to protect your mental health.

However, friends are a vital support system in all of our lives, not to mention great fun to be around when you find the right people. Therefore, it's valuable to work out ways to make friends in a way that suits you and your anxiety rather than avoiding it.

Embrace Yourself

When you have social anxiety, you might think or act differently to others. That's okay. The goal is to make friends in a way that works for you.

The first step towards this process is to manage your fight-or-flight response. This term is commonly used for the urge to avoid situations that make you anxious because of perceived danger. Try to work with your fight-or-flight response. Acknowledge that the situation is stressful for you and make the 'fight' less stressful by introducing options to leave or keep yourself calm.

Find Common Ground

You'll find talking to someone far more manageable if you can find something you both enjoy and know a lot about.

A lot of social anxiety comes from the fear that you may be mocked or get something 'wrong' in a social situation. These circumstances are unlikely to happen, but you'll be more able to tell yourself that if you're confident talking to

someone. Draw some of this confidence from finding a topic you know a lot about and that makes the other person feel at ease with you.

Take Breaks

As with any stressful situation, socialising and meeting new people can be tiring. Be sure to take frequent breaks, particularly if you draw your energy from being alone. Unwind however you choose or try some of these popular relaxation methods:

- Reading
- Exercising
- Household jobs
- Writing or journaling
- Cooking or baking

Be sure to listen to your mental and physical health so that you know when to take a break.

Don't be afraid of tech

It's a common misconception that technology has led to isolation. Whilst you may find that excessive technology use distracts you from tasks or real-world relationships, it is also a valuable tool for making new connections.

Social media is exactly that - social. Social media platforms are increasingly important for making friends, particularly among young people. People worldwide bond over shared interests, however niche, and can socialise from anywhere.

While they can't replace real-world friendships entirely, social media platforms and messaging apps are invaluable for making socialising accessible to those with anxiety and other health conditions.



Practise your social skills

Social skills, like any other skill, grow with practice. You'll feel more confident socialising if you've practised some of your core social skills and sought advice on how to build relationships.

Just remember that there are very few concrete rules - adapt this advice to your situation and comfort levels. For example, many people make eye contact with new people to establish a rapport, but some people aren't comfortable doing so. In this case, you might show your interest in another person in other ways, perhaps by asking them genuine questions about themselves or with open body language.

There's no one right way to make friends. By remembering this, you can help manage your social anxiety and approach relationships in a way that suits you. Take small, manageable steps and be kind to yourself, even when your social anxiety makes things challenging.

For more information on managing your social anxiety and looking after your mental health, [contact us](#) at The Fircroft Trust.

See how the Fircroft Trust can help you in other ways...

Visit thefircrofttrust.org and see how our Specialist Services can benefit you.

t: 020 8399 1772

e: office@thefircrofttrust.org

w: thefircrofttrust.org