As we mentioned earlier, questioning is the key exercise. What does failure mean to you? For those of us who experience social anxiety, one small mistake is enough to ruin everything. You've probably spent years convincing yourself that people are mean and the world is a dangerous place. Social anxiety has become your coping strategy. Now it's time for a change.

Separate Yourself From Your Behavior

You can use it to focus solely on thoughts and avoid mixing them with emotions. This is the main reason why we put so much emphasis on keeping a thoughts journal. You take one small, barely noticeable mistake and blow it out of proportion. You believe your negative thoughts (e.g. 'Everyone is looking at me'). But they're looking at you because your behavior attracted their attention, not because there's something wrong with you. How can we test the validity of our assumptions? Easy, by questioning them! For example, if someone tells you that your presentation was a bit confusing, you can either take it personally and feel offended, or accept it as valuable feedback.

Find Counter Evidence

Next time you make a small mistake (e.g. spill coffee on your pants, stutter in front of an audience, etc.) just stop for a second, acknowledge the fact that you've made a mistake and move on. It's all about shifting your focus. Paying too much attention to your small mistake is actually a short introduction to rational living. Your social anxiety is not caused by other people's actions, but by how you interpret those actions. Remember the dysfunctional schemas? If the filter is 'bad', so is the information that passes through it. These 6 principles will teach you how to challenge automatic negative thoughts.

There's No Failure, Only Feedback

Do Others Notice Your Mistakes?

Unfortunately, social anxiety makes you extra vulnerable to other people's opinions. For example, if someone tells you that your presentation was a bit confusing, you can either take it personally and feel offended, or accept it as valuable feedback. How can we test the validity of our assumptions? Easy, by questioning them! For example, if someone tells you that your presentation was a bit confusing, you can either take it personally and feel offended, or accept it as valuable feedback.

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Sometimes, negative thoughts are triggered by emotional responses. This is the case of ‘hot cognitions’. In other words, some of your negative thoughts are accompanied by emotions (fear, worry, etc.). Instead of finding reasons to believe your faulty thinking, seek evidence to contradict it. For instance, if you think that everyone is watching you, ask yourself if there's any evidence to support this. Are you acting differently today than you usually do? Are people pointing or whispering behind your back? If the answer is no, then it's time to challenge your thinking.

Question Your Assumptions

Another reason why those of us who experience social anxiety are easily disturbed by negative thinking is our tendency to perceive failure as something completely bad. In fact, this negative thinking is because of their emotions. Experts refer to them as 'hot cognitions'. In other words, some of your negative thoughts are accompanied by emotions (fear, worry, etc.). Instead of finding reasons to believe your faulty thinking, seek evidence to contradict it. For instance, if you think that everyone is watching you, ask yourself if there's any evidence to support this. Are you acting differently today than you usually do? Are people pointing or whispering behind your back? If the answer is no, then it's time to challenge your thinking.

Question and Question Again

The main reason why people who experience social anxiety find it difficult to cope with negative thinking is because of their emotions. Experts refer to them as 'hot cognitions'. In other words, some of your negative thoughts are accompanied by emotions (fear, worry, etc.). Instead of finding reasons to believe your faulty thinking, seek evidence to contradict it. For instance, if you think that everyone is watching you, ask yourself if there's any evidence to support this. Are you acting differently today than you usually do? Are people pointing or whispering behind your back? If the answer is no, then it's time to challenge your thinking.

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