

# CHAPTER 1

## What Are the DSM Criteria for Social Anxiety Disorder?

### Diagnosing Social Anxiety Disorder

Social anxiety disorder, or SAD for short, is an anxiety disorder marked by a persistent fear of one or more social or performance situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny and negative evaluation by others. The individual fears that he or she will show anxiety or act in a way that will be humiliating or embarrassing. This unreasonably strong fear invariably provokes anxiety, which may take the form of a situationally bound or situationally predisposed panic attack (i.e., a panic attack that always or is likely to occur in response to the social situation).

Persons with SAD know that their fear is excessive or unreasonable. Despite this, they typically avoid feared situations or endure them with intense anxiety or distress. Situations that are typically feared may include social performance demands, such as eating, writing, or speaking in front of others, as well as any number of social interactions from small talking to carrying on conversation with others.

Some individuals with SAD show fear to only one or a few social situations, typically performance-type situations such as public speaking. Others show a more generalized fear of several situations, including both social performance and social interactions.

The anxious anticipation, distress, and avoidance characteristic of the disorder interferes significantly with the person's normal routine, occupational or academic functioning, social activities or relationships; or there is marked distress about having the social anxiety. These last features are significant in differentiating social anxiety disorder from normal shyness and social concerns.

#### SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

- Persistent fear of one or more social situations
- Fear that he/she will be humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise evaluated negatively
- Anxiety or panic in response to the social situation
- Avoidance or endurance with distress
- Significant interference with the person's normal routine; occupational or academic functioning; social activities; or relationships; or there is marked distress about having the social anxiety

**EXAMPLES OF COMMONLY FEARED  
PERFORMANCE SITUATIONS**

- Speaking in public
- Formal (large groups) speaking?
- Informal (small groups) speaking?
- Writing in front of others
- Eating in front of others
- Playing an instrument
- Playing sports
- Entering a room full of people
- Using a public toilet

**EXAMPLES OF COMMONLY FEARED  
SOCIAL INTERACTIONS**

- Socializing
- Going to a party
- Making "small talk"
- Eating lunch with peers
- Dating
- Asking a teacher for help
- Speaking to a boss at work
- Asking a salesclerk for help
- Asking for directions

## Chapter Review

1. What are the diagnostic criteria for social anxiety disorder (SAD)?
2. Name and discuss examples of commonly feared social performance and interaction situations.

## Chapter Review Test Questions

1. What feature of SAD helps differentiate it from normal shyness?
  - A. SAD may involve anxiety symptoms; shyness typically does not.
  - B. SAD may involve public speaking fears; shyness typically does not.
  - C. SAD involves clinically significant distress or disability; shyness typically does not.
  - D. SAD and shyness are two names for the same thing.
2. Which of the following is most likely to be feared and avoided by someone with SAD?
  - A. An interactive classroom
  - B. Driving an automobile
  - C. Flying in a plane
  - D. Listening to a public speaker

## Chapter Reference

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text revised). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.