How to Overcome Social Anxiety

Overcoming social anxiety involves learning how to break the vicious cycles that otherwise keep the problem going. There are three main methods:

1. **Reducing self-focused attention**. The aim is to shift your attention away from yourself: to forget yourself so that you can behave more naturally and spontaneously when with other people. Paying more attention to people and things outside yourself gives you a more accurate view of what is happening around you. It stops you relying on guesswork, and helps to make you less self-conscious.

2. Doing things differently. The aim here is to discover how to face difficulties instead of avoiding them, and to take the risk of doing so without using safety behaviours for protection. The aim is to discover how to devise experiments that reveal what happens when you do things differently. The information you pick up in your experiments can then help you to rethink your old patterns of thinking.

3**. Changing thinking patterns**. This involves learning how to think again about the dangers and risks involved in social situations. Because the fear in social anxiety focuses on ideas about what other people think about you, it helps to learn how to recognise and to re-examine your patterns of thinking — your thoughts and your expectations.

Your confidence may grow quickly or more slowly. When it is slow to change, this may be because you need also to work on your underlying beliefs and assumptions.