**Tips to Help Overcome Shyness and Social Awkwardness**

Feeling shy or awkward in certain situations is understandable. Don't we all have a little nervousness before we go talk to that guy or girl, or get sweaty palms before giving a speech? For some, though, shyness and social awkwardness may not be circumstantial, but constant. This can be very frustrating and hard to overcome, but there are some things you can do to help overcome your shyness and approach people in social situations. Here are some tips.

**Learn to Laugh**

There's something about laughter that makes everyone feel more comfortable. This is why "ice breaker" activities at parties are often designed to get the participants laughing. So don't be afraid to laugh at someone's jokes, or learn a few funny lines yourself (not canned "pick-up" lines, but clever observations or comments).

**Force Yourself to Stay**

Sometimes, shy people feel so uncomfortable in a social situation that they just want it to end; they just want to get away. Consciously resist this impulse. Tell yourself to stand your ground, stay put, and interact. Remember, the other person is not going to breathe fire; he or she just wants to have a conversation and get to know you.

**Learn to be Comfortable with Silence**

Social situations can feel especially awkward if you are uncomfortable with mutual silence. This may trigger shy people to "babble" to fill the silence, which then makes them feel even more awkward because they feel like what they're saying is silly or nonsensical. So be cool - some silence between people is okay. In fact, it helps give the other person a chance to think before he or she speaks. The person you're speaking with will appreciate this!

**Stretch**

Just like physical stretching, socially and psychologically stretching can be somewhat uncomfortable, even painful. But also like physical stretching, it's necessary. If your first instinct is to say "No" when someone asks you to do something, stop and think first. Tell the person you will get back to him or her if you aren't sure. This will give you some time to pluck up your courage and say "Yes."

**When to Seek a Professional**

There is a point when simple shyness and social awkwardness may be an actual disorder. Social anxiety disorder and social phobia are real disorders that may need the help of a professional. The difference between shyness and these disorders is how much it affects your life.

For example, if you are so shy and embarrassed by just the thought of having to introduce yourself to others or attend a party that you go to great lengths to avoid the situation, it might be a social disorder. When it's social anxiety or phobia, you have trouble living a normal and productive life due to your social fears.