

Safety Behaviors

One of the most harmful responses to anxiety is avoidance. When a person avoids the source of their anxiety, they feel relief. However, the next time they face a similar situation, their anxiety will be worse.

Safety behaviors are subtle actions used to avoid anxiety in social situations. For example, someone who is anxious about socializing at a party might focus on their phone to discourage others from approaching. Although safety behaviors provide some relief, they make anxiety worse in the long run.

Anxiety	➔	Safety Behaviors	➔	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drawing attention to myself in groups 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speak very softly • avoid eye contact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • temporary relief from anxiety • difficulty making friends • people think I'm unfriendly • I never face my fear

Circle the safety behaviors you use to avoid social anxiety, or write your own.

<p>speaking very little</p>	<p>speaking very softly</p>	<p>holding arms stiffly at sides to prevent trembling</p>
<p>standing far from others to avoid conversation</p>	<p>avoiding sharing personal information</p>	<p>avoiding eye contact</p>
<p>constantly checking appearance in mirror</p>	<p>obsessing over appearance before socializing</p>	<p>coming up with reasons to leave social event early</p>
<p>using drugs / alcohol</p>	<p>avoiding eating in front of others</p>	<p>wearing excessive makeup to hide blushing</p>
<p>avoiding asking questions</p>	<p>excessively rehearsing what to say before socializing</p>	<p>using distractions to appear busy (e.g. phone, TV)</p>
<p>talking excessively to avoid silences</p>	<p>lying or exaggerating to look better</p>	<p>continually seeking reassurance or approval</p>
<p>caving to peer pressure or wishes of others</p>		