

## MINDFULNESS PRACTICE FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY

**Mindfulness:** paying attention to something in the present moment with curiosity rather than judgment.

**Thought defusion:** being aware of your thoughts and feelings without becoming involved with them.

**External mindfulness for social anxiety:** paying attention with curiosity (taking interest) in the conversation, person, activity and/or situation in the present moment, while treating your thoughts and feelings like background noise. Get absorbed, engrossed, lost in the conversation or activity. Focus on what you see and hear (touch, taste, smell), rather than what you feel and think. *Get out of your head and into the moment.*

### 1. Curiosity training while observing:

- Daily watch one or more of these attention training videos. Start with videos 6-8, then watch 1-5: [youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiGQ1gp\\_IGNW8OdES0K5pITPvz4pVPp0d](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiGQ1gp_IGNW8OdES0K5pITPvz4pVPp0d). Get absorbed in all that you see and hear in these videos, while treating your thoughts and feelings as background noise. Gently return your attention to what you see and hear whenever you're distracted.
- Watch this music video about a socially anxious high school senior (Waving Through a Window from the musical, *Dear Evan Hansen*): [youtube.com/watch?v=RElOnCTwiF0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=RElOnCTwiF0). Optionally watch any other music video of your choice. Slowly alternate your focus on the lyrics, the instruments, the different singers and actors. Watch the video again and switch your focus to different elements. Get engrossed in what you see and hear. Treat your thoughts and feelings as background noise.
- When you tire of the recordings, go into a location with a variety of sounds and sights, and ideally including people you are not interacting with. Spend 10 minutes or so closely paying attention to what you see and hear, slowly alternating your focus from one sight or sound to another. Treat any thoughts and feelings you may have as background noise.

### 2. Curiosity training while participating:

- Every day for at least 5 minutes, focus mindfully (with an attitude of curiosity as opposed to judgment) during conversations you are in. **Get absorbed / lost in the conversation.** Treat your thoughts and feelings like background noise.
- Make sure you put yourself in such situations daily so you can practice.
- Ideally start with conversations in which you are pretty comfortable. Proceed to conversations you are more anxious about as you get better at this. Consider signing up for anonymous conversations with eager strangers through the *dialup* app.
- Adopt an attitude of curiosity: ie. take interest in the person(s) and what they are saying.
- Practice this gently, patiently and persistently; don't criticize yourself or strain to be perfect at this.
- Optional: silently say "mindful," "curious," or "background noise" when you slip and focus on thoughts or feelings; then return your attention to the conversation or activity in the moment. Or simply return your attention to what you see and hear without using the silent word.
- If you have difficulty remembering to practice, **turn your social anxiety into a cue:** whenever you feel anxious during an interaction, **treat that anxiety as a reminder to get out of your head and focus externally on the conversation / activity / person in the moment.**

# MINDFULNESS PRACTICE LOG

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Curiosity training while...

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| <b>Write date</b> ➔  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>OBSERVING</b><br>(log what you observed, how long, % mindful)           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>PARTICIPATING</b><br>(log conversation / activity, how long, % mindful) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| <b>Write date</b> ➔  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>OBSERVING</b><br>(write what you observed and your % mindful)           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>PARTICIPATING</b><br>(log conversation / activity, how long, % mindful) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| <b>OBSERVING</b><br>(write what you observed and your % mindful)           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>Write date</b> ➔  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>OBSERVING</b><br>(write what you observed and your % mindful)           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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