

13 Confident Ways to Overcome Your Shyness

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Those who have never suffered from shyness have no idea how debilitating it can be, especially for someone in a professional situation. If shyness is holding you back, learn how to get past it and become more confident.

Shyness can truly hold people back--partly because those who are shy tend to avoid public situations and speaking up, and partly because they experience so much chronic anxiety.

If that's you, take comfort in knowing you are far from alone--four out of 10 people consider themselves shy.

But here's the good news: Shyness can be overcome. With time and effort and a desire to change, it's possible to break through.

If your shyness is severe, you may need help from a therapist or counselor, but most people can overcome it on their own.

Take your first steps in getting past shyness with these 13 techniques to help you become a more confident you.

1. Don't tell.

There's no need to advertise your shyness. Those who are close to you already know, and others may never even have an opportunity to notice. It's not as visible as you probably think.

2. Keep it light.

If others bring up your shyness, keep your tone casual. If it becomes part of a discussion, speak of it lightheartedly.

3. Change your tone.

If you blush when you're uncomfortable, don't equate it with shyness. Let it stand on its own: "I've always been quick to blush."

4. Avoid the label.

Don't label yourself as shy--or as anything. Let yourself be defined as a unique individual, not a single trait.

5. Stop self-sabotaging.

Sometimes we really are our own worst enemy. Don't allow your inner critic to put you down. Instead, analyze the power of that voice so you can defuse it.

6. Know your strengths.

Make a list of all your positive qualities--enlist a friend or family member to help if you need to--and read or recite it when you're feeling insecure. Let it remind you how much you have to offer.

7. Choose relationships carefully.

Shy people tend to have fewer but deeper friendships--which means your choice of friend or partner is even more important. Give your time to the people in your life who are responsive, warm, and encouraging.

8. Avoid bullies and teases.

There are always a few people who are willing to be cruel or sarcastic if it makes for a good punch line, some who just have no sense of what's appropriate, and some who don't care whom they hurt. Keep a healthy distance from these people.

9. Watch carefully.

Most of us are hardest on ourselves, so make a habit of observing others (without making a big deal out of it). You may find that other people are suffering from their own symptoms of insecurity and that you are not alone.

10. Remember that one bad moment doesn't mean a bad day.

Especially when you spend a lot of time inside your own head, as shy people tend to do, it's easy to distort experiences, to think that your shyness ruined an entire event--when chances are it wasn't a big deal to anyone but you.

11. Shut down your imagination.

Shy people sometimes feel disapproval or rejection even when it isn't there. People probably like you much more than you give yourself credit for.

12. Stare it down.

Sometimes when you're scared, the best thing to do is to face it head on. If you're frightened, just stare it down and lean into it.

13. Name it.

Make a list of all your jitters and worries. Name them, plan how you're going to eliminate them, and move forward.

Suffering from shyness shouldn't keep you from the success you are seeking, so try these simple tools and make them work for you--in fact, they're good techniques to try whether you're shy or not.