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Social Anxiety Symptom Severity scale (SASS)

The following scale was developed to measure the severity of symptoms of social anxiety. It is intended to assist CBT therapists and their clients informally to determine the initial level of social anxiety symptoms and any changes in symptom severity that occur across treatment. It cannot be used to make a diagnosis and it has not been validated in clinical trials. It is based on the APA's DSM-5 diagnostic criteria, where criterion A states that people with Social Anxiety Disorder show "marked fear or anxiety about one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is structured using the Clark and Wells (1995) CBT model of social anxiety which emphasises the importance and role of i) social situations that elicit fear, ii) assumptions of negative judgements in social situations, iii) somatic and cognitive anxiety symptoms, iv) self-consciousness, and v) unhelpful behaviours including avoidance and unnecessary precautions.

Instructions:

For each question below, please choose the statement that best describes how true that has been for you over the past week:

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	A lot	Extremely
A: Social situations: The idea of being in one or more of the following social situations makes me anxious...					
1. Going to a party or other social gathering	0	1	2	3	4
2. Making a presentation, leading a discussion, or speaking up in front of others	0	1	2	3	4
3. Eating, drinking, or writing in front of other people, or using a public toilet	0	1	2	3	4
4. Having social conversations, introducing myself, making requests, or giving and receiving compliments	0	1	2	3	4
5. Speaking to someone in authority	0	1	2	3	4
				Subtotal A	
B: Fear of negative judgement: In a social situation I am concerned that people will...					
1. Think I am stupid, unintelligent, a failure, or worthless	0	1	2	3	4
2. Think I am unattractive or poorly presented (e.g. wearing the wrong clothes)	0	1	2	3	4
3. Criticise, reject, mock, or belittle me	0	1	2	3	4
4. Think I am awkward, embarrassing, foolish, or weird	0	1	2	3	4
5. Think I am socially inadequate because I didn't know what to say or do, or I that I had said or done the wrong thing, or I had offended somebody	0	1	2	3	4
				Subtotal B	

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C: Anxiety symptoms: I am concerned that if I were in a social situation…					
1. I would feel panicky, anxious, worried, on edge, or nervous	0	1	2	3	4
2. My muscles would be tense, and I would have trouble relaxing	0	1	2	3	4
3. I would have a racing heart, trouble breathing, feel faint, or shaky	0	1	2	3	4
4. My mind would go blank	0	1	2	3	4
5. I would feel sick, nauseous, weak, or have jelly legs	0	1	2	3	4
				Subtotal C	
D: Self-consciousness: in a social situation I am afraid that people will notice that I am:					
1. Blushing noticeably	0	1	2	3	4
2. Sweating excessively	0	1	2	3	4
3. Shaking or trembling	0	1	2	3	4
4. Looking shifty or evasive	0	1	2	3	4
5. Sounding odd or anxious, for example, gabbling or rambling	0	1	2	3	4
				Subtotal D	
E: Avoidance and safety-seeking behaviour: because I am anxious about social situations:					
1. I try to avoid anxiety-provoking social situations wherever possible	0	1	2	3	4
2. I use alcohol or medication, or carry or wear a 'lucky' object, to calm my nerves or give me confidence	0	1	2	3	4
3. I leave early or participate as little as possible, avoid eye contact or try to deflect attention away from myself	0	1	2	3	4
4. I over-prepare or mentally rehearse how I will act or what I will say either before or during the event	0	1	2	3	4
5. After the event I analyse in detail how I behaved and how I thought I came across	0	1	2	3	4
				Subtotal E	
				Total: A + B + C + C + D + E	

The range of scores for this questionnaire is 0-100. Although it has not been validated, a reasonable guide would suggest that if you answered mostly 0 and 1 (score of 0-25) you experienced no or very little social anxiety in the last week, mostly 2 (score of 25-50) moderate social anxiety, mostly 3 (score of 51-75) a lot of social anxiety, mostly 4 (score of 75-100) extreme social anxiety.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Clark, D. M., & Wells, A. (1995). A cognitive model of social phobia. In R. G. Heimberg, M. R. Liebowitz, D. A. Hope, & F. R. Schneier (Eds.), *Social phobia: Diagnosis, assessment, and treatment* (pp. 69–93). The Guilford Press.

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