



Students Scientific Conference

Social Phobia - The curing of Social Anxiety Disorder

Edit Dohányos

Supervisor: Mária Kölcseyne Balázs

Banská Bystrica
2016

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
1. Social phobia as a psychiatric disease	3
1.1 The formation and variety of SAD	4
1.2 Symptoms	5
2. Social Anxiety Disorder as a natural phenomenon	5
2.1 Interviews and my own experiences	6
3. What can we do?	7
3.1 Improvement of confidence.....	7
3.1.1 Think about the fear.....	7
3.1.2 Prepare yourself conscientiously!.....	7
3.1.3 Decide: you will succeed!	8
3.2 Useful advices right before performances.....	9
Summary.....	10
Sources:	11

SOCIAL PHOBIA - THE CURING OF SOCIAL ANXIETY

DISORDER

Introduction

In each person's life there comes a time when we have to face with a new challenge: we have to make performances. This very first time usually appears in kindergarten and it is coming with us through our whole teenager ages while we are studying . After finishing school, at our workplace we have to make presentations in a predefined topic. We are not the same, so everyone feels different when they have to make a performance and probably some people have negative experiences about this situation for the first time. If we have an introvert personally we can suffer from stepping on the stage and talk. It is outside of our comfort zone and most of the times, that scares us more than it should.

In the first part of my presentation I would like to talk about social phobia generally, its symptoms, formations and variety. In the second part, I would like to share the results of interviews and my own experiences too. In the end, I would like to focus on stage fright, its formation and curing of the stage fright.

1. Social phobia as a psychiatric disease

Social phobia (social phobia or social anxiety disorder) is a psychiatric disorder when the patient feels anxiety and irrational fear during public appearances. The patient is insecure and he/she is terrified of getting into an embarrassing situation. The fear and distress causes negative effects in school and at work, maybe it can causes negative impacts in our relationships too or simply just makes our every day life harder. (Atkinson, 2005)

The patient does not dare to

- introduce himself/herself
- talking in front of others
- making eye contact
- getting into the centre of attention
- doing anything while others watching
- going to social meeting

- getting critics or being rejected.

Social phobia is the most common anxiety disorder, based on domestic and international data - unbelievable but true - it affected one in ten people during their lifetime.

1.1 The formation and variety of SAD

Social Anxiety Disorder appears very early, usually before we reach the age 25. Some research suggests that one in five people who has this phobia has a fear to get to know others in early childhood, before the age of five, and every second around the age of 15 years. Some professionals also says that the appearance of social phobias reach a peak when we are between 11 and 15 year old. There are several psychic and biological factors at the formation of social phobia. (Gelanus, 2008)

Psychic factors:

- humiliation which was previously experienced
- negative experiences
- strict bringig-up
- bad behavior pattern (It is learned from parents)

Biological factors:

- high sensivity of stress
- brain center which controls the fear
- defective metabolism

Canadian researchers studied this phobia on more than 8000 person, between the age of 15 and 64. According to the results, 13% of examinee have faced with this phobia or some of them still struggling with it. (Gelanus, 2008)

There are two kinds of social phobia that scientists already discovered:

1. Generalized social phobia - it includes all situations
2. Non-generalized social phobia - it limits only one situation (for example public appearence)

If a person needs medical treatment they separate these groups from each other. (Comer, 2000)

1.2 Symptoms

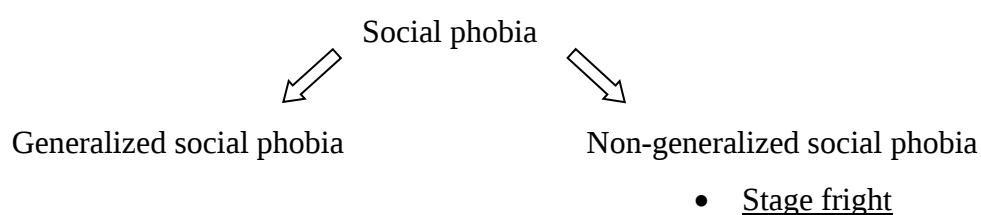
A person who has to deal with social phobia can feel very serious anxiety, which contains the following symptoms:

- increased heartbeat
- trembling
- sweating
- muscle tension
- stomach pains
- dry mouth
- cold or hot flushes
- blush
- headache or feeling pressure sensation in the head. (Gabbard, 2008)

2. Social Anxiety Disorder as a natural phenomenon

We experience social phobia in our daily lives, because we have to make presentations, lectures on something. Right before getting on the stage, we feel fear which is meant to be the stage fright. So we have stage fright before performances, but what does that mean exactly? Let me explain it!

The stage fright is the feeling of fear to perform in front of an audience. In some cases stage fright may be a part of a larger pattern of social phobia, but many people experience stage fright without any wider problems. This is the part of our daily life, the permanent change of our responsiveness. The person wants to perform perfectly on an exam, interview or a presentation but he or she is so afraid of making mistakes and fail. The stage fright is fear to make mistakes in front of others. Several international surveys has proved that we are more afraid of public shame than anything else. A certain amount of anxiety can be performance-enhancing because more adrenalin is produced in our body which makes us more active and motivated.



2.1 Interviews and my own experiences

I made my own mini research so I have asked six people during an interview. 2 of them are men and 4 of them are women. Their ages between 19 and 50. They all have experienced public appearance. I quote the most typical of their answers.

" When I have stage fright, my heart beats really fast, I am sweating and sometimes I am trembling. I don't like to perform but I would be happy if I could overcome this fear." 19 years old, woman, student

"Yes, I can be really stressful, my palms are sweating, I have stomach cramps and I feel like I can not speak. When I feel insecure, I smile a lot. I don't like to perform, even if I can make a presentation which is interesting for me." 19 years old, woman, student

"When I perform, I am sweating and my limbs are trembling. Generally I like to perform but I should handle my stage fright symptoms." 29 years old, man, employee

"I like to perform. My pulse goes up, I have stomachache until I start, but during the presentation I am not afraid." 21 years old, man, student

"In the past, I used to be very nervous but I am getting more and more confident. I trembled and I felt my voice choked and my face burned. Basically I like to perform, because it is unescapeable to talk in a job interview and being on stage helps me overcome the stage fright, so I am not emberassed anymore." 21 years old, woman, student

"At the beginning of my teacher career I had stage fright, but as the years went by, it slowly dissappeared. My hand was cold and I trembled. I always was over prepared and maybe it wasn't a good idea." 45-50 years old, woman, teacher

Do you remember when I told about how many people experiences this feeling during their lifetime?

Let's talk about myself for a minute. I am standing here. How do I look? How do I feel? In my point of view, my palms are sweating and my heart starts beating faster right before the presentation. When I am in the middle, I calm down and I feel that everything is alright. I can control my emotions, my fears, I am fully prepared for this presentation and this gives me

enough confidence to talk here right now. Of course I would like to practice more and more to be more confident because it is necessary everywhere to perform.

3. What can we do?

It is a fact that we have to handle the fear of performing. There are some people who handle it easier and some of them find it extremely hard. There are several books, scientific work which takes up the questions about curing the stage fright. I would like to give you some useful advices to learn the perfect technique of presentating.

3.1 Improvement of confidence

3.1.1 Think about the fear

"Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain." said Emerson. Public appearances are the nature's own method to overcome shyness, developing courage and self-confidence. Why? Because public performing makes us handle our fears.

- Don't think that you are the only one who is afraid of speaking.
- A certain amount of stage fright is extremely useful! Stage fright prepares us for the unusual challenge. You should not be scared if your heart beats fast or you are breathing faster.
- Proffesionals have stage fright too. Before they begin to speak, they almost always have stage fear and it is usually disappears after the first sentence.
- The most important reason of fear is that we are in an unknown situation. Public performances are unknown for most of the people. Only one thing makes this simple and easy: a lot of exercise and leaving our comfort zone if it is neccessary. (Dale, 1962)

3.1.2 Prepare yourself conscientiously!

„Pure love drives out the fear“ says the apostle John Paul, so does the conscientious preparation. Only a well-prepared performer deserves to be confident.

- Do not learn your speech by your heart. The conscientious preparing does not mean you have to be eager beaver and just sit down and do not stand up until

you know all the words you want to tell later. The performer who writes and learns the speech only wasting his/her time and energy and put himself/herself in danger. In all our lives we speak spontaneously. We have got thoughts and if it is clear, the words come naturally and unconsciously. Why risking it with some perfectly pre-memorized speech?

- Collect and organize your thoughts. Think about the significant events in your life which are provided lessons. Then gather your own thoughts, experiences and own beliefs. The real preparation means that you reflect on your topic. All you need for this is a little focus and disciplined thinking. Do not overcomplicate yourself.
- It is a good idea to create a mini performance with your friends. They can be your judging audience and you do not have to be too hard on yourself if they disagree with you. It helps a lot if you hear your own voice and you are facing with some open-minded people. It is essential to practice if the presentation is done. It can help a lot in the way of speaking because the audience is not unknown and they can openly express their point of views. (Carnegie, 1962)

3.1.3 Decide: you will succeed!

Only three things are necessary for this:

- Dig as deep in your subject as you can. You have to convince yourself that you will talk about something important, you have to believe in what you serve. Thoroughly explore the topic and capture the essence of it.
- Do not think about the worrisome circumstances. If you think about that you will stuck during the performance, you can easily destroy your own confidence before the performance. Let's focus on the other performers so you will not have the ability to be very nervous.
- Keep yourself a pep talk. Sometimes you have got doubts about your topic. And that is absolutely normal, there is nothing wrong with you. You think that you did not choose the right topic and the audience will find it boring. When you start to hesitate, keep yourself a pep talk. Tell yourself that you chose the right topic and the audience will be amazed about it. A sincere word of

encouragement based on reality has a much stronger effect than anything else. You are the audience's leader, no need to be worried, you are prepared, you made your research and they are going to listen you.(Carnegie, 1962)

3.2 Useful advices right before performances

Right before the presentation you may feel you are not ready for doing this, you are a complete mess and that's when you have to calm yourself down, take a step back, breathe until your mind stop having those thoughts. Let's see how can you handle when you suddenly become so scared and want to runaway from the place instead of stepping on the stage and look in the audience's eyes.

1. Prepare conscientiously!
2. Let's present more and more! Why do not grabbing your teddy bear and have a deep conversation about your subject? If it is possible, perform your presentation as much as you can.
3. If it is allowed, try your speech on the original spot. If it is not possible, imagine yourself there.
4. Prepare mentally for the unexpected hitches.
5. The maximum of concentration and freshness should be at the time when you perform.
6. Do not learn by heart every word about your speech, maybe the first and second sentences should be learned.
7. Be sure that you are relaxed. Bite a piece of chocolate or a banana, it can help recharge your energy storage.
8. Learn relaxation breathing techniques. Use it before you step on the podium.
9. Before you start your presentation maybe you need to force yourself to feel calm and confident. It can be useful if you straighten your back, raise up your chin, smile and get a quick look to the audience.
10. Learn to tolerate that something does not succeed as you planned. Dare to be wrong and make mistakes! Do not forget that the audience is more tolerate than ourselves.

Summary

Social phobia is there everywhere in everybody, regardless to age or gender. It is born with us and it is necessary to us to overcome in it. Everyone has stage fright and the symptoms are quite the same. If you think that you will never succeed, it can happen. But if you decide that you want to become confident, you can easily find the ways to improve. You only can get confidence if you do something you never did before. Be brave and jump in foreign places of life. You will end up a winner. If you succeed you will gain a huge amount of confidence. And what happens if things does not go as planned? You will still gain experiencing skills which is also important because you can use it on your next performance. It's not failing, it's about learning. Do not be too hard on yourself.

I believe having a strage fright is not that terribly bad thing, you do not need an expert's help to overcome in this. It is mostly in your head, do not let yourself to be controlled by your own negative thoughts. There are great books out there which can give you that tiny piece of confidence that you miss in yourself. You can not runaway from those situations when you have to perform in life. You only have to believe in yourself, be confident and as relaxed as you can. You should not be scared of unknown situations because that is where the magic starts.

Sources:

Dale Carnegie: The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking (1962)

Susan Quilliam: Optimum Performance (1996)

Atkinson, R.L., Hilgard, E.R. et al. (2005). Pszichológia. Budapest: Osiris 571

Comer, R.J. (2000). A lélek betegségei. Budapest: Osiris 172-186

Glowacka, Ewa: Self-evaluation and musical performance anxiety of students, Psychology of Music Today 1995.p.269-274.

Bodnár Elek: A lámpaláz leküzdése - kézirat 1982. BME mérnöki Továbbképző Intézet, Budapest

Hebb, D.O.: A pszichológia alapkérdései. Gondolat, 1975. Budapest

Dr. Völgyesi Ferenc: A lámpalázról és a foglalkozási neurózisokról Lélek és természettudomány.22.szám.Novák Kiadó 1939.Budapest

Selye János: Életünk és a stressz. 1964.

A DSM-IV-TR diagnosztikai kritériumai. Animula, 2001

Gabbard, G. O.: A pszichodinamikus pszichiátria tankönyve. Lélekben Otthon Kiadó, 2008

Perczel Forintos Dóra: A szociális fóbia kognitív viselkedésterápiája. 337-368. oldalak. In: Szerk.: Mórutz Kenéz – Perczel Forintos Dóra: Kognitív viselkedésterápia. Medicina Könyvkiadó Zrt. Budapest, 2006

Fritz Riemann: A szorongás alapformái. Háttér Kiadó, 2000