# SOCIAL ANXIETY IN THE WORKPLACE: WHAT IT IS, ITS EFFECTS, AND HOW TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

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Do you feel like you're constantly under scrutiny at work? Do you feel like everyone is watching and judging you? If so, you may be suffering from **social anxiety**.

Social anxiety disorder is the fear of social situations that involve interaction with other people. This can include things such as public speaking, making introductions or being introduced to others, reading out loud, eating in front of others, and even writing in front of others.

People who suffer from social anxiety experience social interactions differently than others who don't have the condition. For some people, social interactions can be a minor inconvenience. However, for those who suffer from social anxiety disorder, it can be debilitating and interfere with daily life. In the workplace, this can lead to decreased productivity and missed opportunities.

## Why is it Important for Everyone to Understand?

Social anxiety is a common condition that can have a profound effect on an individual's life. While it is often misunderstood, social anxiety is a real and serious condition that can cause significant distress. The condition can be diagnosed by a medical professional.

Individuals with social anxiety often avoid situations where they may be watched or evaluated by others, which can lead to social isolation and difficulty functioning in work, school, and other areas of life.

Teachers, career developers, and others need to understand what social anxiety is and how it can impact people. By increasing awareness and understanding, we can help individuals who are struggling with this condition and incorporate strategies to create response banks that will help students as they prepare for careers.

## What Are the Effects of Social Anxiety in the Workplace?

Social anxiety has actual symptoms (like having a cold presents with symptoms of a runny nose, fever, and cough) and therefore can be diagnosed through a medical professional.

Social anxiety can have several effects on an individual's ability to function in the workplace.

People with social anxiety may:

- Avoid situations where they will be required to interact with others, such as networking events or team-building exercises.

- Be less likely to speak up in meetings or contribute to group projects.

- Have difficulty making eye contact or speaking to authority figures.

- Experience physical symptoms such as sweating, racing heart, or shaking.

Often, because managers are not equipped with proper information regarding this condition, the symptoms may appear as nervousness, which can easily translate into an employee performance deficiency. However, with awareness of the condition, managers can create opportunities to increase productivity, especially when the employee is productive with day-to-day tasks.

## What Can Be Done to Increase Productivity?

Many things can be done to help people with social anxiety function more effectively in the workplace.

- **Encourage social interaction:** Make time for informal socializing, such as coffee breaks or after-work drinks. This can help people with social anxiety feel more comfortable interacting with others.

- **Create opportunities for one-on-one interaction:** In large group meetings, provide opportunities for people to speak one-on-one with the group leader. This can help those who are shy or anxious feel more comfortable expressing their ideas.

- **Offer flexibility:** Allow people to work from home or create their schedule, if possible. This can help to reduce stress and anxiety.

- **Provide support:** Offer resources, such as an employee assistance program or counseling services, to help people with social anxiety cope with their condition.

By taking these steps, we can help people with social anxiety feel more comfortable in the workplace and increase their productivity.

## Resources for Social Anxiety Disorder

The first step is acknowledging that you may have social anxiety and seeking help from a mental health professional. If you are currently experiencing symptoms of social anxiety, there are many resources available to help you cope. Here are a few:

- **Therapy:** Talking to a therapist can help you understand and manage your social anxiety.

- **Support groups:** There are many support groups available, both in person and online, which can provide community and understanding.

- **Self-help books:** There are some books available on the topic of social anxiety, which can provide valuable information and support.

- **Online resources:** There are many websites, blogs, and forums dedicated to helping people with social anxiety.

*By seeking out these resources, you can begin to manage your social anxiety and live a more fulfilling life.*

## Conclusion

Social anxiety is a condition that can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to function in the workplace. By increasing awareness and understanding, we can help people who are struggling with this condition get the support they need. Creating a supportive workplace-- and not simply focusing on what is perceived as a "weakness"--might be the difference in retaining valuable human capital, rather than discharging talent by checking boxes on a performance evaluation.

So if you or someone you know suffers from social anxiety, don't hesitate to seek out the available resources.

*With the right help, people with social anxiety can lead fulfilling and productive lives.*