

# How to Help a Friend With Social Anxiety: 8 Tips

## 1. Be Patient

The [treatment and recovery process for social anxiety](#) can be a long one. It can take months to change behavior patterns that your friend has become accustomed to over time. Try not to become too frustrated with them or lose your temper around them. To be supportive, you can respond to their anxiety attacks with [mental health first aid](#).

## 2. Focus on Their Feelings

You don't need to ask your friend why they are feeling anxious. Instead, ask them how they are feeling. It can encourage them to make a list of their symptoms. Do not bombard them with questions. Allow them to feel the way they do without interruption or guilt. If they're crying, let them cry. If they are overreacting, let them overreact. Giving them room to feel will allow them to release the pressure they are feeling.

Physical feelings of anxiety, such as stiffness or stomach pains, usually start with thoughts or ideas. It would help if you first asked your friend what they are worried about. As they describe their fear to you, stay calm no matter how unrealistic their fears or anxiety triggers seem. Keep in mind that, to your friend, these worries are real and impact their life. They are not to be dismissed as unrealistic or irrelevant. Meet these confessions of worries with curiosity and support, not judgment.

## 3. Don't Criticize

People who have social anxiety are usually overly critical of themselves. They also assume that other people are judging them, too. Having social anxiety disorder is much the same as feeling socially incompetent and believing that other people also see you in that way. Being critical of your friend, or other people in front of your friend, could add to the problem.

Don't tell your friend that they need to loosen up, or that they need to talk more. Try understanding the limits that social anxiety can put on their life and try not to expect more than they can give. Be patient and hopeful that your friend will gradually improve as you provide a supportive environment for them.

## 4. Use Distraction Techniques

Distractions can help your friend reduce their anxiety for the moment. Suggest taking a walk, playing a game or going to a bookstore. Reading is a good distraction if your friend has a specific genre they find intriguing. You can also help them build their own [personalized anxiety crisis kit](#). These activities can distract their anxious brain and allow them to calm down naturally.

## 5. Help Reframe Their Thoughts

Your friend's anxiety can make it difficult for them to gain a perspective on social situations. You can help them think of the bigger picture by asking questions like:

- What is the worst that could happen?
- What is most likely going to happen?
- What's something good that could come out of this?
- Have you ever felt like this before? You survived it last time.
- If you look back at this situation years from now, what will you think about it?

## 6. Avoid Avoidance

A critical part of overcoming anxiety is to gather the courage to face what triggers anxiety. It would help if you encouraged your friend to avoid hiding from social situations. Help them start small, like having them call a friend or family member instead of sending a text. From there, you could go to non-crowded places as you slowly help them avoid being alone.

## 7. Remain Positive

Recovery is a gradual process for someone with social anxiety. It is essential for you to recognize the small steps and progress that your friend makes. Praise these small

achievements with positive feedback. Tell them you are proud of them for trying, even if they don't meet their goals.

[therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/social-anxiety-disorder/how-to-help-a-friend-with-social-anxiety/](http://therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/social-anxiety-disorder/how-to-help-a-friend-with-social-anxiety/)