



Overcoming

SHYNESS



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INTRODUCTION

What's the one thing holding you back from meeting more members of the opposite sex? Is it that you don't know what to say? Are you self-conscious? Are you worried that they'll reject you?

If you answered "yes" to all three questions, you may be shy. Shyness is one of the biggest barriers to achieving the kind of dating life you dream of. Guys want to approach girls but can't get up the courage to do so. Girls want to talk back to cute guys but find themselves tongue-tied and embarrassed at the attention.

Fortunately, shyness is one of those traits that most people grow out of. That's because almost everyone is shy at a certain point in their life, especially when they're young. If you haven't had a lot of experience in many social situations, being shy is a natural response to being unfamiliar with the "rules" for the situation. You're not sure how you're supposed to act, so you end up being quiet, feeling awkward, and being highly conscious of being out of your depth.

As most people get older, they gain confidence as they interact with more people. Having a job that requires a lot of customer interaction, or moving to a new town or university where you don't know anyone, will help you get over your shyness, because they force a person to learn socializing skills quickly.

However, for some people, shyness is a more serious matter. The seriously shy feel terrified at the prospect of having to interact with someone they don't know. Even the idea of exchanging words with a clerk at a grocery store can cause sweaty palms and the shakes. As a result, these shy people live life with their heads down, avoiding anyone's eyes and avoiding any human contact that might require them to speak.

In this part of *Overcoming Shyness*, author A. Waterman will explain exactly what shyness is and what it isn't. She'll explain how others perceive shy people—the findings may surprise you. Finally, she'll review some of the most common solutions for overcoming shyness.

In the second part of *Overcoming Shyness*, author K. Cotton will take over to explain how shyness affects dating. You'll learn how to project confidence, how to approach attractive people, how to deal with rejection, and the top ten tips for men and women on getting over shyness.





PART ONE:
UNDERSTANDING SHYNESS
BY A. WATERMAN



1. WHAT IS SHYNESS?

Have you ever wondered where being shy comes from? Were you born to be shy from the start, or was it something you developed as you were growing up?

Amazingly enough, researchers have found that there is a genetic component to shyness. Harvard psychologist Jerome Kagan studied groups of children to see whether or not they displayed “shy” or “bold” character traits. He found that even babies as young as four months old displayed distinct character types. Some were bold, while others were timid. In his study of two-year-olds, roughly a quarter of the children fell into the “bold” category while one-fifth were categorized as “timid.” As these children grew up, the shy ones tended to play alone while the bolder children tended to play in groups.

However, this research doesn't mean that if you're shy now, you were born to be shy. Being outgoing and socially confident are **learned behaviors** that you can acquire just as you would any other skill. Nor does this research mean that if you were bold and outgoing as a child, you won't end up being shy in later life. Only one third of severely shy children in Kagan's research had any genetic predisposition.



Quite simply, for some people shyness is harder to overcome than others. This does not mean that it's impossible, however. If you find it difficult to make small talk, you can improve your conversational skills by taking an interpersonal communication class or by reading the newspaper to pick up topics to talk about. If you're not sure what the social rules are in a situation, you can ask people you trust or find books on the topic, like dating guides. I'll give you some more solutions for overcoming shyness a bit later.

Right now, I'd like to address some of the many misconceptions about shyness.

SHYNESS AS A LABEL

Many children, when they're young, get stigmatized by being labeled as “shy.” Because their parents and teachers have told them that they're shy, they end up believing it—even if their timid behavior was just a temporary thing. As a result of being labeled, they may revert even deeper into acting timid because they have an excuse: their “shyness.” Worse of all, being shy becomes part of their



self-identity. They believe that they are shy, that they'll always be shy, and that the confident person they wish they were will always be out of reach.

But shyness is **not** something permanent that you either “are” or “are not.” There are many people who are confident in most situations but act shy when they're in a situation that they don't feel comfortable in. Other people are quite outgoing among friends but act shyly around strangers.

That's because shyness is a response. It's a way of behaving. Depending on the situation you're in and the people you're around, you may act shy or you may act confident—it all depends.

Most importantly, **shyness is natural.** What would happen if you boldly charged into every situation, even if you didn't know the social rules? You'd probably end up making a fool of yourself or offending someone. It's good to keep quiet, hold back, and observe until you get a handle on the situation. In fact, in many cases **it's better to be timid at first** rather than rush ahead and get yourself into trouble.

Now that we've established that shyness is a behavior that can actually be good in some circumstances, what about people whose first instinct is always to hold back, feel extremely nervous, and avoid conversations? For many people, **shyness becomes a habit.** That's because it's comfortable. Shy behavior keeps them from putting themselves at risk of rejection or saying something stupid. When shyness becomes a habit, life starts passing you by

Shyness is only a problem when it interferes with you getting on with the life you want. Unfortunately, for many shy people, their shyness interferes with them getting to know members of the opposite sex. They may find it hard to make a lot of friends. As a result, they want to stop being shy.

And guess what? That's the first step you need to get over your shyness: you simply have to want to stop being shy. Once you're committed to changing your life, your next step will be to **start changing your shy behavior.** I'll tell you more how to do this in a later chapter.

BEING SHY DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE LOW SELF-ESTEEM

One common misconception about shyness is that shy people have very poor self-esteem which keeps them from feeling confident in their interactions with others. This isn't true. Shy people have no higher rate of poor self-esteem than anyone else. In fact, if anything, the shyness itself can make people feel inadequate when it comes to social situations, causing low self-esteem rather than vice versa.



This means that someone telling you to “get over it” and “believe in yourself” doesn’t understand shyness very well. Shyness isn’t something that you can get over by just being more self-confident.

The only way to start overcoming your shyness is by improving specific skills, such as communication. And, as anyone knows, learning a new skill—like music, say, or painting—requires a multi-pronged approach of education, practice, refining your technique, and more practice. In this book, you’ll learn some techniques you can use.

BEING SHY DOESN'T MEAN YOU DON'T LIKE PEOPLE

Sometimes, people get labeled as “introverts” because they’re shy. Because shy people feel nervous about meeting new people and experience anxiety in social situations, they often end up with a smaller social network than outgoing people. Nevertheless, this doesn’t mean that shy people don’t want to have just as many friends as more outgoing people.

Most shy people I know love having friends and love being with people they trust. They end up socially isolated *only* because they have a difficult time reaching out to make new friends. Introverts, on the other hand, prefer solitude and the inner life to being with other people. Many famous scientists and artists were introverts, wholly focused on their own creative life and projects to the expense of their social engagements.

It is quite possible to be a shy introvert ... but it’s also possible to be a shy extrovert. **People like Carol Burnett, John Travolta, and Johnny Carson all considered themselves shy** even though they were actors and public figures. (If you’re shy, you’re in good company!) You can seem gregarious and extroverted to people around you but still feel social anxiety on the inside.

So how do you seem to people? Do people notice you’re shy? In the next chapter, I’ll tell you how shyness can actually cause people to treat you differently.





2. HOW SHY PEOPLE ARE PERCEIVED

Some people—especially other shy people—consider shyness a positive character trait. They believe that shy people are more empathetic, kinder, and more loyal. Shy people are often better team players and put more effort into their relationships. They're even perceived as being better listeners and more thoughtful—mainly because they talk less!

Although shy people have many positive traits, shyness on its own is widely considered a negative trait—one that can overpower a person's other positive traits. The reason for this is simple: if a person is shy, they're harder to get to know. The harder they are to get to know, the less likely it is that others will discover the many fine traits hidden beneath the shy exterior.

The simple truth is that shy people are not as easily or widely liked as outgoing people. If you look at the most popular guy or girl in any social environment, you can almost instantly assume that they're outgoing. Shy people tend to feel more comfortable sticking to the corner of a room where they're less likely to bump into many people, while outgoing people naturally seek the center. As a result, the outgoing person meets many new people and forms new friendships at every turn, while the shy person instinctively minimizes his or her chances of meeting anyone.



There's nothing at all *wrong* with being shy, but being shy *does* cause other people to treat you differently. Some people assume that because you don't have much to say, you're boring or dull. Other people assume that if you're silent, you don't want to talk to anyone. Other people will think that you're stuck up, cold, or aloof because you don't hang out with them or join in conversation with their group. They think that your behavior is a choice, rather than simply the only way you know how to cope with social situations.



When you're seriously shy, you often don't let people get to know you. People feel an invisible barrier around you, almost as if you're sending out "Don't Approach Me" signals. They see how awkward you become when other people get too close or when a social situation seems imminent. As a result, they simply assume that you're not a friendly person and pass you by for people who are more willing and eager to engage in conversation.

You may feel that people are judging you unfairly without really getting to know you, but people do this all the time. There are so many people out there to meet that we have to use some criteria to decide whom to approach. A guy scanning the dance floor for a girl to ask to dance will probably choose someone whom he can easily approach, who is smiling, and who seems friendly and outgoing. He won't even notice the girl who is sitting by the wall in the shadows, feeling nervous and terrified that a guy will ask her to dance—even if she actually does want this to happen. That's because everybody tends to take the easy route.

HOW APPROACHABLE ARE YOU?

To gauge how approachable you are, ask yourself the following questions.

- ✓ Do you smile often?
- ✓ Do you keep your arms loose as opposed to crossed?
- ✓ Do you keep your head up?
- ✓ Do you stand up straight as opposed to slouching?
- ✓ Do you meet someone's eyes easily?
- ✓ Do you position yourself to maximize the chance of people passing by you?
- ✓ Do you mind other people seeing you?
- ✓ Do you usually notice when someone says something to you?
- ✓ Do you say "hi" back to most people?
- ✓ When you're talking with someone, do you think more about them or about yourself?
- ✓ Do you accept most invitations you're given?



If you tend to turn down invitations, focus on what you're going to say next in a conversation (instead of on the other person), avoid being seen, and tend to miss it when other people are talking to you, then you are probably quite shy. As a result, people find it hard to approach you. And if they find it hard, they probably won't do it.

Shy people can feel very self-conscious in social situations. They can worry whether or not they're doing the right thing and spend most of a conversation desperately trying to think of what to say next. Their nonverbal behavior can send "stay away" signals: they cross their arms, keep their head down, slouch, and don't smile. As a result, their conversation partner picks up on their nervousness and thinks that it's because of them.

For example, John approached Katie, a shy girl at a dance. When he was talking with her, he noticed that she wasn't meeting his eyes. Instead, she seemed really nervous. She kept making fidgety gestures, playing with the strap on her purse. All her responses were short and left awkward silences. He assumed that she felt uncomfortable around him because she didn't like him, so he ended the conversation and left.

Next, John approached Anna, an outgoing girl. She smiled at him warmly. When he spoke, Anna kept her head up and looked at him so that he really felt she was listening. He noticed how brightly her eyes sparkled. Even when there was a silence in the conversation, it felt comfortable because he could sense that Anna was relaxed. After a few minutes, he asked Anna to dance. He felt that they really enjoyed one another's company.

Unfortunately, people may assume from your shy behavior that you simply don't like being around them. They pick up on your discomfort. They may end up becoming quite negative towards you as a result, because they think that you've rejected them first—when in reality you just didn't know what to say or do.

YOUR SHYNESS MAKES OTHERS SHY

One fact that surprises a lot of people is that shyness is actually "contagious." If an outgoing person—say, John from the example above—tries to have a conversation with a very shy person like Katie, he will start to feel himself at a loss for words. Unfamiliar feelings of awkwardness and uneasiness will trip up his tongue. In little time, the outgoing person will soon find himself acting just as "shy" as the shy person!





That's because the outgoing person is used to getting feedback from a conversation. He needs a response to what he says—whether a smile, a comment, whatever—in order to formulate the next thing to say, and so on. But a super shy person provides none of this feedback. The outgoing person can't understand why the shy person is so quiet. He isn't used to being in this situation, so he starts to feel uncomfortable.

As a result, many outgoing people may actually avoid conversation with shy people, because they don't like feeling shyness themselves.

Clearly, it's important to learn to change your behavior in these circumstances so that everyone feels at ease coming up to you and chatting with you. But how do you do that? I'll tell you in the next chapter.





3. SHYNESS SOLUTIONS

Now that you understand some possible causes and effects of shyness, how do you overcome them so that you can meet more people and make more friends?

You **can** do it. Believe in your power to transform your life. Remember that just because you've been shy in the past doesn't mean that you have to continue to be shy. Or, in other words, just because you have behaved in a shy way in the past doesn't mean that you are a "shy person" by nature. Many people have overcome their social anxiety and gone on to have the kinds of lives they dreamed about. That person can be you.

All you have to do is learn new skills to change your behavior. In this chapter, I'll give you some tips on making small talk, on controlling sweaty palms or a thudding heart, on increasing your approachability, and on additional techniques like visualization and self-hypnosis that may help.

Learning to act in a confident, outgoing, and friendly way is a process that will take education, practice, and making plenty of mistakes over time before you master it. Don't expect change to happen overnight.

Once you leave your safe cocoon of shyness, you'll find yourself feeling vulnerable and exposed to rejection. This is a risk that you're going to have to accept. If you never make the attempt to meet another person, you'll never end up getting rejected—but do you really want to live like that? For me personally, it's better to have approached 10 people, 9 of whom end up rejecting me, to find that one person who ends up becoming a great friend. Remember: the rewards of overcoming shyness are worth the challenge.



WHAT DOESN'T WORK: ALCOHOL

Some people try to overcome their shyness with alcohol or drugs. When they're drunk or high, they lose the paralyzing self-consciousness that keeps them from interacting with others. As a result, they feel more successful socially.



However, **neither alcohol nor drugs really help in overcoming shyness**. You can't spend your life drunk or high. If you're really going to get rid of your shyness for good, you have to do it on your own terms. You need to make sure that shyness doesn't keep you back from going the places you want to go, talking to the people you want to talk to, or advancing at work. (Shyness actually makes you less likely to get promoted—a good reason to tackle it now!)



Not only does relying on alcohol or drugs create a chemical dependency, **it also doesn't work**. Alcohol and drugs create a false sense of social success. You may feel as if you're less inhibited, but you're also less conscious of what you're actually doing.

Research shows that just two alcoholic drinks can negatively affect your ability to hold a conversation. That's right: **negatively**. And four drinks will seriously **inhibit** your conversational skills. You may feel as if you're becoming silver-tongued after four or five drinks, but ask the sober people around you. Chances are that you'll find your perception of your conversational dexterity differs greatly from an independent observer's.

The myth of alcohol as a social lubricant is a dangerous one for shy people to believe, because studies show alcohol can actually increase nervousness—not relax the drinker. There are better ways to relax and feel comfortable around people. Don't use alcohol as a way to avoid facing your shyness.

JUMPING OFF THE DEEP END

Some people give shy people the advice that it's best to plunge right in. The only way to get over shyness is to throw yourself into social situations and do that which you fear the most.

The method can work for some, but for others it can have the opposite of its intended effect. Seriously shy people can be so traumatized by the experience that they retreat further into their original behavior. Do yourself a favor: **ease in gradually**. Start with situations that cause you small amounts of anxiety (like asking for information, making small talk as your purchase is rung up, or calling someone you don't know), then slowly build your way up to situations which cause you more and more anxiety.



Set yourself small goals. It may just be to say hello to the cashier, or smile at one stranger, or catch someone's eye. It may be to talk to someone waiting in line with you. Starting out small allows you to create realistic expectations for yourself and feel a sense of accomplishment as you achieve more and more difficult goals.

Practice with strangers or people you'll never see again. The stakes are much higher when it comes to people that you already know or want to become friends with. When you hone your skills on complete strangers, you'll feel secure that even if you make a mistake, you'll never see that person again.

One guy I know actually drove to a suburb or distant part of the city each weekend so that he could practice his skills picking up women in an environment where he was certain he wouldn't run into anyone he knew. He told me that the change in scene made him feel like he could pretend to be a different person. No one knew him, so no one knew that he was actually quite a shy person in his daily life.

Do whatever it takes to keep pressing your boundaries. The more comfortable you become interacting with people in everyday circumstances, the more natural it will feel to strike up conversations with people in social situations like a party or club. **Surround yourself with confident people** so that their confidence rubs off. Friends can also be great motivators when you share your goals with them, so make sure they know that you're trying to overcome your shyness.

TECHNIQUES FOR SMALL TALK

One of the most important skills you have for achieving social success is the **ability to make small talk**. It will serve you well whether you're at work, at a party, or in line at the store. Striking up conversations with strangers can be immensely satisfying, because it helps pass the time and is a pleasant way to connect with one of the hundreds of people who pass us anonymously every day.

The best way to improve your conversational skills is to **educate yourself**. Read the newspaper, watch the news, and pay attention to any interesting news items or current debates. Stay current; know what is playing at the movie theater, keep up on interesting local events, and be familiar with the latest bands. The more you know about a range of topics, the more likely it will be that you will be able to offer an opinion or further information about any given topic of conversation.





Also, be aware **when things that happen in your daily life would make a great topic of conversation**. If something interesting, funny, or scary happens to you, imagine how you would describe it to someone else. Your own experiences are full of great conversation material.

Come prepared. If it helps, brainstorm and write down a list of conversation topics for times when conversation runs dry. This is especially effective when you know the person you'll be talking with (e.g., a first date). Some people spend hours thinking of great opening tactics they can use to approach women, or quirky conversational tidbits that they can drop in a conversation. There's no shame in being well prepared.

Ask questions. When conversation runs dry, don't let it fall into awkward silence. Ask the other person a question. If you don't understand something—say they just said they were into vexillology—and you had no clue what it was), then simply ask, “Could you explain that to me?” *By the way, vexillology is the study of flags.*

You can ask any number of questions, but make sure that it doesn't sound like you're interviewing the person. Add encouraging comments like, “That's interesting,” “I always wished I could do something like that,” or, “You know, that really makes sense to me because...”

If they don't seem keen to answer, or if they answer with monosyllabic responses like a grunt or a curt “yes” or “no,” then abandon your line of questioning. They clearly don't feel comfortable with it.

Make observations. Often, one way to spark a great conversation is simply to make an observation. Point out something in your immediate environment, or mention something you saw on television or read in the news or heard from someone else. The great thing about this conversational tactic is that you don't have to express your opinion. You just throw an observation out there and see where the other person takes it.

Remember people's names. Always get a person's name when you're talking with them. As you're talking, drop their name in a few times, e.g. “You know, Mike, I have to say that this is the slowest night I've seen in this bar...” or, “Jenny, you are so right. I completely agree with that.” Using a person's name in conversation makes them feel flattered.

Paraphrase. Make sure that you understood by repeating what the other person just said in your own words, e.g., “So you mean that you actually think that Hampson would make a better mayor than Gordon Thomas?”



Be interested in them. People who are curious about the people around them have a natural warmth and empathy that attracts others. When you're interested in the person you're talking with, they feel flattered. Best of all, it takes the pressure off from you. The more you focus on the person you're talking with, the less self-conscious you'll feel.

Practice active listening. One problem many shy people have is thinking of what they're going to say next during the whole time that the other person is talking. As a result, they often miss some important information. **If someone is talking to you, really listen to them.** Lean forward, keep your eyes on them, and ask for clarification. Don't feel pressured to respond immediately when they stop speaking. Take some time to think about what you want to say.

Remember what they said. Once you've talked to a person one time, it will be easier to talk to them the next time, because you'll already have some information about them to go by. Bring up a topic you discussed previously or something that you remember them saying. People feel impressed and flattered when you remember part of a previous conversation and integrate it into a current conversation.

CONTROLLING NERVOUSNESS

If you're really shy, you may find that you feel physically paralyzed at the thought of striking up a conversation with a stranger. You may feel as if the person is evaluating and judging you with every word you speak.

Most of your anxiety at social situations is self-generated. When you meet someone for the first time, that person may not be particularly thinking of you. However, at that very instant you are meeting them, you may feel as if their opinion of you is the only thing on this earth that matters. You may imagine the thoughts running through their head and hold your breath until you see either the light of approval or scowl of rejection on their face.





To get over your anxiety at meeting people, you need to do two things. First, you have to remind yourself of **the relative unimportance of any single person's response to you**. The most outgoing people meet tons of people that they don't particularly click with, but because they ultimately meet *sooo* many people, they're always finding one or two people they *do* click with. You're not going to achieve any better statistics, so stop being concerned about that particular person's response to you and start looking for some more people to meet.

Second, you need to recognize that the majority of negative thoughts running through your mind (e.g., *that the other person won't like you, that they'll think you look strange, that they're looking for reasons to get out of the conversation*) are actually **your own thoughts** and do NOT reflect what the other person is thinking at all. As a result, you may assume that the other person isn't enjoying the conversation with you and end it abruptly ... when, in actuality, the other person was enjoying talking with you.

Everybody has a stream of thoughts running through their head at any single moment in time. For example, take a simple act: a woman reaching out her hand to shake the hand of her date. While she's doing so, she may suddenly wonder whether or not her skin is soft enough (did she put on moisturizer?), whether her hand is moist (oh no, nervous sweating!), and whether he'll like the perfume she daubed on her wrist.

Notice what all these questions have in common? They all introduce **an element of self-doubt**. Often, when we're with someone, the running monologue in our head keeps questioning and second-guessing ourselves to try to answer the endless question: *Does he or she like me?*

We're our own worst critics. We think that if only we can get all of the numerous details right (say the right thing, wear the right clothes, look the right way, drive the right car), then people will like us. As a result, in the background of all our interactions with people, we see ourselves hovering like critics, shouting, "Don't say that, stupid!" "How could you be so dumb? He's going to hate you now," or, "I'll bet you've got food stuck in your teeth, that's why she's staring. Check a mirror now!"





The best thing you can do for your own shyness is to **silence your inner critic**. That's right. Tell that critic to shut up, and you'll take things from here, thank you very much. Do all that you can do before meeting someone to ensure that your appearance is up to standard, then forget about what you look like. Enjoy your conversation, and if you happen to say something that sounds wrong, let it slide. Forget about it and keep on with the conversation.

Try to focus as much *in the moment*, with the person you're with, as you can. Try as hard as possible not to think about yourself or anything you might be doing wrong. Once you gain a measure of control over your shyness, you'll be able to maintain some self-awareness in situations and correct mistakes before you make them.

As you focus on being in the moment, relax. Notice when your heart is beating fast, or when you're talking faster or in a higher-pitched voice than normal, and calm down. Take deep breaths. Avoid clenching your hand, gritting your teeth, or tightening any part of your body. Let your hands hang loosely. Change your eye focus away from the person you're talking to and look at something else for a minute if you find yourself getting nervous.

You don't have to maintain eye contact with the person you're talking to while you're doing the talking. **The person who's listening should always be looking at the person who's talking.** If you need to, look elsewhere while you're talking, but when you finish make sure to make eye contact again before the other person speaks.

If you find yourself getting really nervous, to the point that you feel you're about to do something stupid, then excuse yourself. There's nothing wrong with ending a conversation at a high point. Just make sure to ask for the person's phone number—or better yet, email address—before you do.





VISUALIZATION

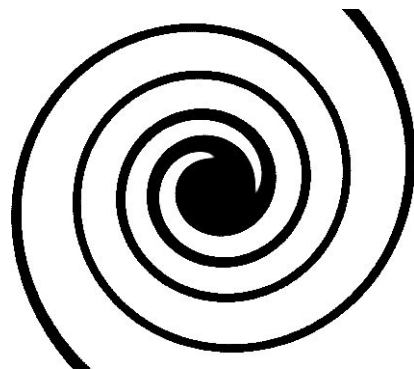
One way that you can increase your chances of successfully meeting someone new is through using a technique called visualization. In this technique, you visualize yourself in a perfect encounter with someone from start to finish. You basically practice overcoming your shyness in your head before actually doing it in real life.

Make sure that you're in a relaxed mood, in a place where you feel comfortable and won't be disturbed. Try imagining yourself in a social situation that you often encounter, or a situation that is coming up. Visualize the scene as clearly as you can, with particular people. Envision yourself responding to them in a witty, confident way. Make sure that you're realistic with your visualization. Don't see yourself as being the life of the party if you're usually on the sidelines. Instead, see yourself at the center of a group, or mingling through a crowd, or talking to someone you've never talked to before. Take yourself through an entire conversation, from start to finish. Envision how you will exit the situation.

Practice visualization techniques often. When you find yourself in a similar situation in real life, you should be able to recall that feeling of relaxation that you experienced while visualizing the scene. Because you've already mentally experienced the situation before, you'll feel confident in your ability to handle it. This technique can be particularly effective for men wanting to pick up women.

SELF-HYPNOSIS

Self-hypnosis is another strategy that has been used with some success to overcome shyness. In self-hypnosis, you open your mind to suggestions that reflect the desired attitudes or behaviors you wish to have. Basically, you unlearn the negative scripts that mentally trip you up in social situations. You replace them with powerful, affirming statements that are then reflected in more socially confident behavior.



For more information on self-hypnosis, check out the bonus book *The Complete Guide to Self-Hypnosis* found in the 000Relationships.com Members Area. You can try out self-hypnosis tracks in the Audio section of the Members Area.

Now that you understand where shyness comes from more clearly and some strategies you can use to overcome it, you're ready to move on to Part II of this book, in which author K. Cotton will give you a different perspective on shyness: shyness in dating.



PART TWO: SHYNESS IN DATING

BY H. COTTON



SHYNESS & DATING

Has this ever happened to you: you're out at a club or party, you see an attractive woman or handsome guy and you want to go up and say something...but you just simply can't do it because your mind is a total blank?

You're not alone. In fact, they made a movie about this mind-blank thing, called "Say Anything." Of course, you don't want to just blurt out anything because you're afraid you'll say the wrong thing.

And there lies the problem: fear.

The truth is that many shy men are exactly the kind of guys women look for. But since they're too timid, women get left with the swaggering jerks they always complain about but seem to date exclusively. This is a real tragedy for everyone, since the shy men miss out and so do the women who get stuck with jerks.

The converse is true, too. There are plenty of air-headed women who are shallow and don't have much to offer, but since they have lots of friends and perhaps belonged to a sorority in college, they know how to present themselves beautifully. They also know how to be outgoing enough to talk to men. These are the "trophy wife" women. Meanwhile, the brainy and interesting girls who happen to be introverted and shy are sitting at home alone, sharing their unique qualities with the internet. What a waste!

The best way to attack any problem is by addressing the root cause, and the best way to combat fear is to build up your confidence. You've seen confident people—they're the ones who DO go up and talk to that guy or girl that you've got your eye on.

If you've watched them do this, you've seen them pull off a complete self-introduction to a complete stranger with aplomb. They may even end up leaving with that person. How do they do it? I'm going to tell you.

HOW TO PROJECT CONFIDENCE

Ever hear the expression, "Fake it until you make it?" Well, it's particularly appropriate in this case. Notice that the title of this section is not "How to BUILD confidence", but how to PROJECT it. Sure, it's best if you can actually build your self-confidence up to the level that you feel secure about approaching an attractive woman or man.

Building confidence takes awhile, and won't happen overnight, even though it is the best solution. So I'm going to take you through a short-cut. This involves projecting an attitude of confidence.

First, I want you to do some people watching. Go to a public place like a club, bar, or mall, and start watching people. Can you tell just by watching people—without even talking to them—who is confident and who is not? Sure you can! The confident guy or woman—who can go up to literally anyone and just start talking to them—walks with his head level to the ground, chin tilted slightly up. He's making brief eye contact with people as they walk past him, he's got his shoulders squared back, and he has a confident smile that says, "I know who I am and what I can do."

Now look around and see if you spot someone who does NOT look confident. They're not hard to identify, are they?

A man or woman who lacks confidence takes smaller steps, as if they are afraid to step large. They are looking down at the ground to avoid having to make eye contact. Their shoulders are rounded forwards so that their presence is diminished.



OK, now that you've analyzed what confidence looks like, I want you to practice it. Not right out in public yet, but at home, in front of a mirror. Remember that confident girl or guy you observed at the mall? I want you to model your body posture and way of walking after them. This means:

- Chin up, with face facing forwards
- Looking ahead and scanning to the sides (not down at the floor)
- Shoulders back, chest out
- A relaxed look on your face, with perhaps a slight smile

Why a slight smile? Well, think about it...if a stranger came up to talk to you, would you be more likely to respond to them positively if they were smiling or if they were scowling or even neutral? To increase your chances of success at talking to strangers or first dates, you need to remember to smile. I'm not talking about a huge, goofy grin that makes you look like an idiot, just a nice, relaxed smile that says, "I'm a nice person."

Once you think you have the confident look down, I want you to practice it out in a public place where you don't normally go, so that there probably won't be anyone who will recognize you. Try the confident look and walk out among strangers. Note their reactions—you'll probably be amazed when you discover that they're responding much more positively to you.

TALKING TO ATTRACTIVE WOMEN OR STUDLY MEN

Now that you know how to act confidently, you need to know how to scope out a potential dating interest so that you don't waste your time on someone who isn't interested in you.

Upon encountering a stunning woman or studly guy, the trick is to check their Interest Level before you spend a lot of time fantasizing about him or her. In other words, you must determine his or her level of romantic interest in you. Sure, she or he is hot and you're attracted to them, but now we need to know if you've actually got a shot with him or her.

But before I give you a plan of action, we need to talk. To be quite honest and blunt, since you've never talked to this person before, you can't claim you're attracted because of his or her personality. Nope, it's all about looks at this point. You're attracted to a look, or a sense of "chemistry," and that's OK.

The reason for talking is to determine if there's any brains, character, or social skills behind that hot façade. The ugly truth is that many beautiful women KNOW they're beautiful, and they've never had to be nice to anyone in their lives because people have always done sweet things to them just because they're beautiful. So guess what? They learned early on that they don't have to be nice.

And many good-looking guys are the same way. They know women adore them so they don't have to be nice. They can be a jerk and get away with it.

Keep in mind that, as of yet, you have no clue about what their personality is like. In order to qualify her in the personality department, you need to meet her and spend some time with her. For men, the same thing applies.

Here's a well-kept secret: most men with super-high Interest Level in a beauty whom they've never met feel shy and rather flustered. Why? Because when a Victoria's Secret model rejects you it hurts BAD. Same thing for women, when Ken Doll or Captain America says he just wants to be friends...rejection hurts. So, first of all, relax. Just because you talk to someone doesn't mean you'll end up marrying them. You may not even like this person once you get to know them, and knowing that automatically takes some of the pressure off.





WHAT TO SAY

I recommend that you spend some time observing the person before you approach them and see if you can pick up on what they're thinking. This can often give you a clue into an ideal first line. For example, if they're laughing with their friends, a good first line might be, "I just to come over here to see what the joke was. You gals/guy look like you're having a really good time!" If they're staring out the window, you might come up beside the person and stare in the same direction and ask, "So is there something really interesting going on outside that I'm missing?" If the person is fiddling with their drink, you might want to try observing, "I'm sorry, but I couldn't help but notice that you're holding a really interesting drink. What is it?" If they look like they're struggling with something, approach and ask, "Can I help you with that?"

Notice that all of these comments invite a response from the other person. They're friendly but not overt. They invite conversation.

Pickup lines don't. When it comes to approaching members of the opposite sex, don't go for the "easy" route of the pickup line. No one hardly uses them anymore, and they're very hard to pull off unless you're a naturally funny person who can make up one anothe spot. Unfortunately, introducing yourself on the spot doesn't seem to work, either. Women have heard the old, "Hello, my name is..." so many times that they find it easy to brush off the person saying it.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make, though, is to gain drunken courage. Alcohol in small quantities (e.g., one or two drinks) can help loosen you up, but when alcohol becomes a substitute for self-confidence, you're developing a dependence rather than confronting your shyness. Don't do it.





DEALING WITH REJECTION

One of the biggest roadblocks to a shy man in picking up women is fear. Fear that he will be rejected, fear that he won't know what to say, and fear that he won't know how to act. And it's the same way with women, to a lesser extent.

There was a study in which women and men were asked what they each feared most about the other. The women's greatest fear was that a man would physically harm them by hitting or beating them. The men's greatest fear was that a woman would laugh at them.



This may explain a lot of the dating anxiety. Women fear they'll choose the wrong man and get battered, men fear they'll pick the wrong woman and be belittled.

I know you've heard this before, but there is nothing to fear but fear itself. Fear and anxiety will produce distinct psychological consequences, and if there's anything that's going to hinder your success in dating, it is fear.

The fear of being rejected can paralyze your attempts to pick up women or approach men you don't know. Accept the fact that you're going to get rejected some of the time. Just because you get rejected it does not make you worthless.

There can be many different reasons why someone may not be interested in you at any given moment. Most of these reasons have little or nothing to do with you as a person. They may be having a bad day, or they may not be looking for a relationship. Don't take it personally. They don't even know you. Being rejected is just a risk you will have to take. If you do get rejected, it's not the end of the world.

Keep this in mind if you get rejected at a club. No matter how many people are not interested in you, you must remember there are many others at clubs who would be delighted to know you.

To overcome these fears and meet new people, you have got to approach it like you would if you were going to jump in a cold ocean to go swimming. Hurl yourself into it. Take action!

You need to practice talking to people you don't know. Sure, you'll get rejected a few times. We all do. So what if you get rejected? You may never see them again anyway. By practicing, you'll build up your confidence. Also, by accepting the fact that you're only practicing talking to people, the pressure to succeed won't be so great.



Sure, you have thoughts like, "I'm too scared" or "I'm too nervous." But here's the thing: pondering, stalling, postponing, and reconsidering are all delaying tactics that impede action. If you find yourself telling yourself these lies and making excuses, block them out of your mind immediately. There is no such thing as "can not." You CHOOSE to let things stop you and affect you, and dating is one of many areas where people let their fears and negative thoughts take control. If you can identify your negative feelings, take action and deal with them. There is a strong and approachable person under all your fears, you just need to let it out.

Cut out the negative self-talk and don't waste any time or you'll see one person after another walk right out of your life. Don't delay trying to talk to someone or you might find yourself delaying all your life and depriving yourself of romance with hot & sexy single man or woman. A friend once told me that when she looked back on her life from the age of 70, she had no regrets because she made the most of opportunities that came her way. This is a good way to live your life. You only get one chance, after all.



Banish the idea that people are always watching you, sizing you up and evaluating you. The only people who do this are shy people who spend a lot of time fearing that they are being evaluated negatively. The reason you think you are being watched is because you do this to others.



The solution to breaking this habit is to stop judging and sizing people up and you will stop thinking that others are doing the same to you. Otherwise, you'll find yourself trapped in a self-perpetuating cycle that can be very destructive.

Being shy is a state of mind and can be changed with practice. The more you describe yourself as shy, the more you believe it is who you are. Shyness stops you from having fun. Some people even think that being shy and insecure is a very self-centered thing, because shyness and insecurity means you're worrying about how other people see YOU, how they feel about YOU, and how they judge YOU. In this worldview, it's all about YOU.

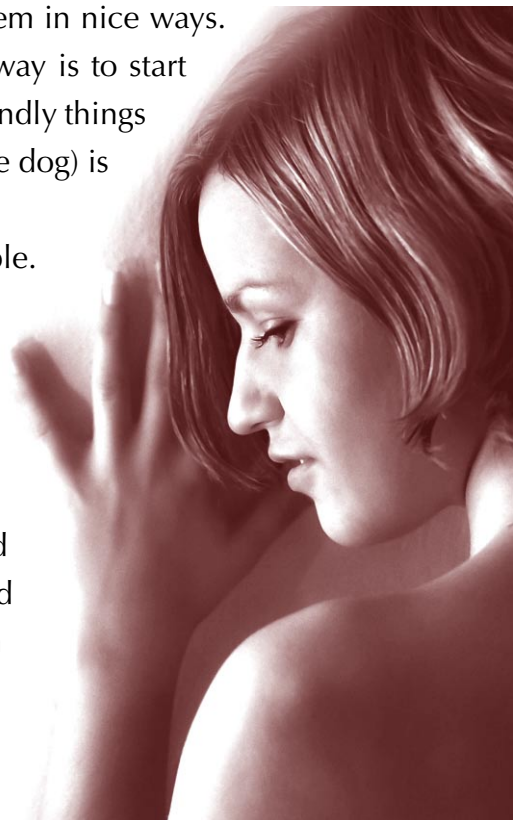
Turn it around and begin to see that most people are shy (albeit at different degrees) and usually waiting for someone to make the first move. Don't you admire those people who can go up to anyone, introduce themselves, and begin a conversation? Well, why can't you become that person?

Now that you know how to project confidence and some ways to start a conversation, I have some exercises for you.



BASIC EXERCISES FOR OVERCOMING SHYNESS

1. Practice your confident act front of the mirror. And make sure you smile. You may think you're smiling, but your mouth may not show it.
2. Start smiling at strangers who don't intimidate you.
3. When that becomes completely comfortable, start smiling at people who do intimidate you, like nice-looking men or women, but not those who you're attracted to.
4. Start smiling at the ones you are attracted to.
5. Start saying hello to people who don't intimidate you.
6. When that feels comfortable, start saying hello to people who do intimidate you, working up to the scariest.
7. Start complimenting people who don't intimidate you. Find something about them like a color they're wearing, a dress, a tie, whatever. It doesn't matter as long as your intention is to sincerely make them feel good.
8. Compliment scarier and scarier people as you become comfortable with each new level.
9. Start flirting with people who don't intimidate you. I don't mean sexual flirting. I'm talking about getting them to laugh, playing with them, complimenting them and teasing them in nice ways.
A great way to learn to flirt in this way is to start with kids. The same kinds of silly, friendly things you can say to a child (or even a cute dog) is what Friendly Flirting is all about.
10. Flirt with scarier and scarier people.
Learn how fun it can be to bring smiles and laughter into people's lives. You don't have to be a comedian to get people to laugh. Watch others, rent movies that have people who act like what I'm talking about and practice until it's comfortable. And always practice each new level on people who are completely un-intimidating to you.





ADVANCED EXERCISES FOR OVERCOMING SHYNESS

1. Start conversations with strangers who don't intimidate you: people in line with you at the supermarket, people in parks, waitresses, and secretaries. Whenever you want to practice, go out and find someone to talk to. Watch what other people talk about. Notice things around you. Make comments, ask questions.
2. As you become more comfortable, start conversations with people who intimidate you a bit more, like really good-looking men and women.
3. Now that you're pretty comfortable with other people, start walking up to people (when it's appropriate) and introduce yourself and begin a conversation. It's all about intention. You have to want it, and you have to practice.
4. If you practice all these steps, I guarantee you'll get over most, if not all, of your shyness. Sure, everyone gets insecure and intimidated occasionally, but they simply acknowledge the feeling and go ahead and do it anyway. You can do this if you really want to. It's up to you to put in the time and work.





MEN'S TOP TEN TIPS FOR GETTING OVER SHYNESS

If none of the advice above has worked for you men, here's a quick and easy Top Ten list you can post on your bathroom mirror as a daily reminder of how to get over your shyness.

- 1. The biggest reason for shyness is the fear of rejection.** Eliminate this factor by approaching a woman or man with the express purpose of picking them up for your friend or your brother/sister. Since your own ego isn't at stake, you'll be less inhibited in your approach. You'll see it's no big deal and will want to pick up for yourself next time. How do you pull this off? Just go up, introduce yourself, chat a bit, then say you've got a friend or brother you think she'd be great with and can you have her number?
- 2. Don't try to do it all at first—take small steps.** It all starts with a smile; show everyone (not just the hot babes) you're friendly and approachable. On following days, move up to saying "hi." A few days after that, engage in small talk. Keep going as you gradually open yourself up to people and see it's not as hard as you thought. If you make a blunder, forget about it. Most people are more forgiving than you think. If beautiful women intimidate you, take baby steps up the hot babe scale. Start by approaching more average-looking women you feel confident with. As you become at ease with them, move on to prettier women, and so on.
- 3. Don't over-sexualize women so much.** When you go over to talk to a woman, don't think of her as a sexual trophy, but as a person like yourself. Keeping things purely sexual will get in the way of your approach. And women can sense when a guy is just after sex.
- 4. Women aren't statues, so don't put them on a pedestal.** Like the point above, don't attach any special significance to the woman you talk to. If you act like she's too good for you, she'll likely start thinking that as well. See her as a human being with all the flaws and qualities of the average person. Talking one-on-one is much nicer than talking down to or up to another person.
- 5. Make sure your expectations are reasonable.** When you talk to a woman, don't expect an end goal; just go with the flow. It'll floor you at how much easier things get when you don't think you have to accomplish something by the end. If you keep your cool, the rewards will present themselves naturally. Learn when to let things slide and when to stand up for yourself.



- 6. Avoid taking it personally.**
If you want to succeed in the game of romance, you can't take every comment, insinuation or joke that a woman might throw your way as a personal affront. People sometimes say things they don't mean. You'll have nothing to be self-conscious about if nothing bothers you. However, sometimes people do make inappropriate comments, in which case you should definitely stand up for yourself.
- 7. Practice listening.**
Don't do all the talking. Let women talk at length about themselves for a while -- something that all people love to do. Ask open-ended questions and just sit back and listen. If the conversation lulls, have new conversation topics ready. And to ease the burden of initiating something, have a few icebreakers handy to get the ball rolling.
- 8. Talk to everyone, as much as you can.**
Don't be afraid to make small talk with everyone you meet, from the old lady who's picking out produce to the bank teller. Practice makes perfect. Most people secretly lament the lack of communication between people, so your friendliness will be welcome. And if it's not, brush it off. Those that snub you are probably inhibited people who never took on the challenge of overcoming their shyness.
- 9. Work through your fear of rejection.**
Great boxers go in the ring knowing there's a chance they'll lose. Similarly, you can't expect to succeed every time. There are no guarantees in life, so view every encounter with a woman as a positive learning experience. The trick here is to not be self-conscious. Shyness and hesitation occur when you think about your flaws. Instead, focus your thoughts entirely on the woman you're talking to. You'll forget about your jitters and she'll be flattered by the attention.
- 10. Get out and socialize.**
Join activities in which you're talking with people, such as the gym, exercise classes, church, a college society, or a hobby club. In these milieus, you must always socialize, and after a while, you'll get comfortable with it. Furthermore, you're practically guaranteed to meet interesting women.



WOMEN'S TOP TEN TIPS FOR GETTING OVER SHYNESS

- 1. A little shyness is OK, but don't let fear show.**

Sure, it's normal and prudent to be afraid of strange men. You see stories in the paper all the time about women who have had very bad experiences with strange men. But if you're in a public place, with others around, let the fear go. It's OK to be a little shy, though—men like solving mysteries.
- 2. Don't try to be something you're not.**

If you're not normally an extroverted beauty or drama queen, don't try to fake that. Just smile, talk, and be yourself. Don't try to censor your thoughts too much. A genuine nature is more likely to win respect and admiration.
- 3. Imagine the man is your brother, or brother's friend.**

You wouldn't be shy about talking to them, so go ahead and just treat them as a conversational partner.
- 4. Don't ask the man too many probing questions about what he does or what his position is.**

This is a sure-fire way to be mistaken for a gold-digger and no man wants a gold-digger. If he tells you he's a janitor or mechanic, be OK with that if you really like him. Judge him on his character, not his income.
- 5. Make sure your expectations are reasonable.**

The meaning of this is slightly different than it is for men. For women, this means that you shouldn't expect the man to solve all your problems. Life won't suddenly become a wonderful, rosy place if you two get together. There will always be problems. The questions is, are they tolerable problems that you can work with?
- 6. Don't be overly sensitive.**

Men are less sensitive than women—that's just a fact. It's likely he'll say something that will hurt your feelings. If it's something minor, the kindest thing you can do for yourself, for him, and for the both of you is to just let it go. If it's major, call him on it. Do NOT just hold it inside yourself and save it for ammunition for later. That's not fair.



7. **Listen.**
Talking too much can turn a guy off really quickly. Avoid talking about people he doesn't know or topics he doesn't care about (like fashion or gossip). Ask him questions about himself and his interests, and listen to what he says.
8. **Practice talking to men you don't know.**
The next time you're in a store, go ahead and chit-chat with the guy behind the counter, or the guy who fixes your car. It can be very intimidating to initiate a conversation with men, but know that they're just as scared of you as you are of them (but for a different reason.)
9. **Never ridicule or criticize the man, especially in front of others.**
The most important thing a man needs from a woman is respect, so don't make him out to be wrong. If he is wrong, use every ounce of tact you have to suggest a better way.
10. **Socialize at healthy places, NOT bars.**
Men at bars are there for one reason—to find women to have sex with that very night. If that's what you want, fine, go to bars. But if you're looking for a relationship, go to places that are not as sexually charged, like church groups, gaming groups, book clubs, bicycling groups, etc.

DONT LOOK LIKE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE

This is one of the most powerful pieces of advice I can give you. When you go out seeking a mate, you give off a desperate, needy vibe. Others pick up on this. No one likes desperate, needy, clingy people.

However, people are completely fascinated by those who act busy, with a sense of purpose, giving off the attitude that they're just too busy to bother.

Anecdotal evidence from many people I've talked to though the years suggests that people have their best luck when they're not looking for anyone.





ABOUT CALLING AFTER THE FIRST DATE

The whole thing about calling after the first date is fraught with danger. It's a very controversial and tricky area. The problem is that men and women attach different meanings to the same phrase. Here's a sample of what I'm talking about:

When the man says: "I'll call you."

The woman thinks that means: He's going to call me tomorrow—yay!

What the man REALLY meant: I'm trying to be polite here and not hurt your feelings, so I'll call you IF I DECIDE I want to see you again.

Here's how this scenario can turn ugly:

1. The man says he'll call.
2. The next day, he doesn't call. The woman is slightly miffed, but trusts he has a good reason—maybe something came up.
3. Two days later, he still hasn't called. Now the woman is starting to suspect she's been rejected, but she still holds some hope he'll call.
4. A week has gone by. Now the woman is quite sure she's been rejected, even though the man SAID he'd call. This makes her very angry.
5. The woman calls the man and chews him out for being a liar.
6. The tragedy of it is, the man may have been about to call her, after having thought things over.



So what can we learn from this? For you men, if you have no intentions of calling, don't say you will. If you do say you'll call, and have decided in the meanwhile you don't want to see her again, call anyway and just keep it short and businesslike. Tell her you had a good time and then say you have to go.

For you women, if he's said he'll call, give him a week. If he hasn't called by then, assume that he's just not that interested and move on.

SUMMARY

When you leave your shyness behind, which will take time and persistence, you'll see how much your life will change, as you'll begin to go after what you want with fewer fears. And here's a secret: should you enter a room and feel those familiar jitters, remember that most people you meet are too busy worrying about what others think about them to really notice and judge you.

If you have to, use the old trick of picturing everyone in their underwear. Now they don't look so intimidating, do they?

Now loosen up and charm away!

