


# The Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety & Shyness

Using Acceptance & Commitment Therapy to  
Free Yourself from Fear & Reclaim Your Life



**With downloadable  
guided mindfulness  
meditations and  
printable worksheets**

**A POWERFUL STEP-BY-STEP  
PROGRAM TO HELP YOU:**

- Understand social anxiety in a new way
- Stop avoiding social situations
- Speak in public – even with fear and doubt
- Start participating fully in the life you want

JAN E. FLEMING, MD  
NANCY L. KOCOVSKI, PhD  
Foreword by ZINDEL V. SEGAL, PhD

# Foreword

by Zindel Segal, PhD

**W**e seem to be living in an age where public rejection sells. How else can we explain the popularity of reality TV shows where anyone can watch an apprentice being fired at work, young women rejected as future runway models, budding singers told they have no talent, or romantic partners who don't get called back after a first date? Watching these shows, it is easy to conclude that these experiences don't linger after a few tears have been shed and some comforting words from the host have been uttered. In real life, however, social anxiety and rejection are not as easily contained. In fact, the lifetime prevalence rates for the point at which such concerns cross the threshold into a clinical disorder are in the double digits. Furthermore, the pervasive influence of these fears in people's lives leads to further retreat and disengagement from healthy routines and social support. This is where *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness* comes in. It is written by two expert clinician researchers who have brought a novel lens to bear on these difficulties and, as a result, have found innovative and powerful ways of helping people confront these fears in the service of getting closer to their valued life goals. This workbook is carefully linked to a growing body of empirical data—including the authors' own groundbreaking research—that supports the effectiveness of mindfulness and acceptance approaches to social anxiety and shyness.

This accessible and well-organized workbook starts by describing a central mechanism in social anxiety and shyness that has unintended consequences, namely, the devotion to

safety. Seen from the anxious person's perspective, safety behaviors and routines protect him or her from taking unnecessary risks in social situations. What can be difficult to appreciate is that this safety comes at a steep price. The perceived success of a "safety first" strategy locks the person into using it with increasing frequency and scope, inevitably reducing opportunities for fresh learning about the validity of the thinking that drives the fears, or even for taking steps to test whether some social situations are truly dangerous.

Drs. Fleming and Kocovski's use of multiple information channels to reveal this "safety mode," by describing its attentional, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral signs, will quickly cue readers to recognize this mode operating in their own experiences. With this as the foundation, the workbook supports the reader's adoption of novel therapeutic strategies drawn from mindfulness meditation and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Through the use of metaphors, exercises, and worksheets for monitoring new experiences, the reader is gently encouraged to engage in tasks that may seem counterintuitive or threatening at first, but are documented to foster growth and reduce suffering. Readers learn how to approach rather than avoid unpleasant emotions, how to gain distance from their anxious thoughts, and how to let go of control agendas. Ultimately, readers learn how to change their relationship to social anxiety and shyness, rather than only seeing the need to eliminate it.

Both comprehensive in its coverage and sufficiently detailed to answer pragmatic questions about how to follow the authors' program, this workbook captures the state of the art in mindfulness- and ACT-based treatment of social anxiety and shyness. Readers will appreciate its modular chapter format, along with the compendium of client narratives and structured home practices. The latter will be especially helpful in showing how to use the therapeutic principles to deal with the challenges around fear and shyness that come up in daily life. Few workbooks succeed at combining therapeutic innovation and clinical wisdom as well as this one, and as a result, Jan Fleming and Nancy Kocovski's efforts will have a significant impact in our field for years to come.

—Zindel V. Segal, PhD  
University of Toronto