

Positive Visualisation for Social Confidence

Using techniques of visualisation, self-hypnosis, positive self-suggestions and affirmations, you can start to build new confident social circuitry in your brain, and with a little practice and persistence, you can gradually erase any old anxious habits your unconscious mind has got into. If you would like to experience more confidence and self-assurance in social situations, and feel generally more relaxed and at ease around other people, give the following exercise a go.

Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed for about 15 to 20 minutes. Sit down in a comfortable chair. Relax your body as much as possible. Close your eyes. Now just become aware of your breathing, noticing the in-breath and the out-breath. Allow yourself to breathe slowly and deeply. With each out-breath, imagine that all your thoughts, cares and worries are flowing out of your mind, and all tensions are flowing out of your body.

Now, think of a social situation that you might find yourself in in the near future that you might feel a little anxious about – it can be real or imagined. Picture yourself in the situation. Think of how you would like things to go – how you would like to feel, act, speak and think in that situation – everything going as well as you can possibly imagine.

Visualise the following (or adapt as appropriate for your particular needs):

- 1)** Imagine yourself just before the event: * Feeling positive and looking forward to the event
* Looking forward to getting to know new people * Looking forward to relaxing and enjoying yourself.
- 2)** Imagine yourself in the situation: * Feeling calm, relaxed, happy, self-assured, confident * Feeling good about yourself * Your breathing calm and relaxed * Your whole body feeling relaxed and at ease.
- 3)** Visualise yourself in the situation: * Standing or sitting up straight, with your head up and your shoulders relaxed * Moving about in a relaxed, open, easy manner * Approaching and joining a group of people * Smiling and making eye contact with people * Asking another person questions about themselves; responding with interest; sharing information about yourself and/or your interests; focusing on the other person/people; chatting in a calm, relaxed manner.
- 4)** Imagine the following thoughts going through your head (repeat them silently to yourself now):
* I feel relaxed, confident and at ease * I feel good about myself * Everyone looks friendly here
* It's going to be fun to meet new people and find out about them * I can easily approach someone and say hello and introduce myself * It's easy to ask someone questions about themselves and get a conversation going * I can easily approach a group, listen to what's going on, and join in the conversation.
- 5)** Spend a few minutes seeing yourself, in your mind's eye, at the social event and imagining things going in the best way possible and visualising yourself feeling, acting, speaking and thinking in your ideal way. (Think up with words, feelings and images of your own that best suit you and your personality – and keep them positive!)

Now let the thoughts, feelings and images of that situation fade from your mind for now and just allow yourself to relax and feel calm and peaceful. Bring your awareness back to your breathing process, noticing the in-breath and the out-breath as you relax down deeply into your chair for a few moments. Now start to take some deeper breaths, bringing your awareness back to your body, to the room or surroundings where you are sitting. Imagine smiling to yourself inside and feeling calm, relaxed and confident. When you are ready, open your eyes and have a stretch before getting up and resuming your day.

Practice the above exercise a few times over the week (or two) before the next social event you are due to go to – and start to notice an increasing positive transformation in yourself and your confidence!