AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Find Your Fierce: How to Put Social Anxiety in Its Place

Social anxiety is tough, but teens don't have to figure it out alone. *Find Your Fierce* by Jacqueline Sperling, PhD, uses evidence-based skills from cognitive behavioral therapy to give teens a toolkit to help them overcome their anxiety and move toward becoming their bravest, fiercest selves.

Here's an excerpt from the introduction and first chapter:

Introduction

Humans are supposed to care about what others think of them, and this starts feeling especially important when you're a teenager. That concern about what others think can sometimes turn into worry about being judged or embarrassed in front of others, grow even bigger, and get in the way of spending time with friends, participating in school, and going out in public. If that sounds like you, you might have social anxiety disorder and you most certainly would not be alone. Social anxiety disorder is the second most common anxiety disorder and affects many of your peers—over 9%.

A lot of people with social anxiety disorder blame themselves for what they're experiencing. No one chooses to feel this way, though, and you certainly did not sign yourself up for this. You might have inherited some genes that make you more likely to experience social anxiety—a lot of teens with social anxiety also have a parent with social anxiety. Sometimes stressful events or big life changes, such as moving to a new school, being bullied, or going through puberty, can bring your social anxiety front and center.

Chapter 1: What Is Social Anxiety?

Social anxiety is a fear of judgement or embarrassment that has lasted for at least six months and gets in the way of life at home, at school, or in other social environments.

For example, social anxiety may make it difficult to attend family gatherings, complete homework, and spend time with friends. Those with social anxiety disorder may avoid raising their hands in class, going to parties, ordering in restaurants, making eye contact, giving a presentation, using public restrooms, eating in front of others, going to school, making phone calls, or texting friends. Social anxiety disorder can look different from one person to the next.

Although social anxiety disorder can get in the way of everyday life, it can be managed with some skills. The aim of this book is to give you a toolbox so that you, and not your anxiety, can be the boss of you.

A type of treatment called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with exposure and response prevention is very effective for social anxiety disorder. CBT focuses on how thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are linked, and teaches you tools to manage all three.

You are the expert on you; no one knows you better. An important part of CBT is that it aims to make you not only the expert on you but also the expert on your own treatment. In this book, you will learn how and why these skills work. There will be activities throughout the book to help you practice what you learn.

This Article's Author

Jacqueline Sperling, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, faculty at Harvard Medical School, and the cofounder and co-program director of the McLean Anxiety Mastery Program at McLean Hospital. She also is the author of the young adult nonfiction book *Find Your Fierce: How to Put Social Anxiety in Its Place* and a contributor for Harvard Health Publishing. Dr. Sperling specializes in implementing evidence-based treatments, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, and working with youth who present with anxiety disorders and/or obsessive-compulsive disorder. She also focuses on providing parent guidance by using treatments, such as behavioral parent training, to help families address children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

Find Your Fierce

Teens will become their bravest and fiercest selves and overcome social anxiety disorder with this helpful, upbeat book written by an expert in the field.

Social anxiety is tough, but teens don't have to figure it out alone. This empowering book will walk them through strategies that work. From practicing mindfulness to relaxing their bodies, readers can train their brains to help them gradually get back to doing more of what they love to do. These tools will help teens manage anxiety in the future and keep it from managing them.

This book uses evidence-based skills from cognitive behavioral therapy to give teens a toolkit to help kids overcome their anxiety and move toward becoming their bravest, fiercest selves.

Lively chapters will engage teens and caregivers alike.

WWW.APA.ORG/PUBS/MAGINATION/FIND-YOUR-FIERCE