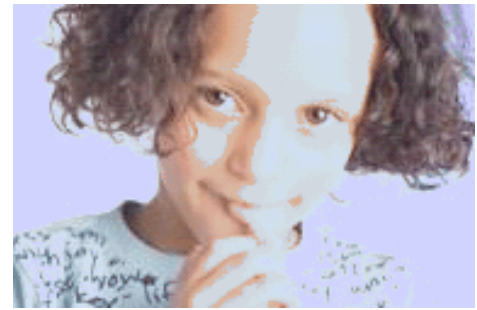


# THE SHYNESS PROGRAM

The Shyness Program, a behavioral therapy program based on the latest research findings, helps shy children become more comfortable in social and performance situations, increase their social skill, and expand their range of enjoyable social activities.



## SHYNESS

Shyness or social anxiety can negatively affect a child's social, emotional, and educational development. Shy children typically experience significant distress in social situations or avoid them altogether. They may be nervous answering questions in class, talking to peers, or playing sports. They may cling to or hide behind their parents. Due to their anxiety, shy children may miss out on events such as birthday parties or have trouble making friends, experiences that are important for a child's social development. Shy children may also complain of physical symptoms, such as stomachaches, for which there seems to be no physical cause. Some shy children may even refuse to speak in certain situations such as school. Parents often understandably feel torn between making their children participate in social activities and letting them opt out. Although many people think shy children are "just shy" and will "grow out of it," research indicates that certain behavioral strategies can be helpful in facilitating the process of social development and interrupting the avoidance pattern that may develop over time as children shy away from social situations.

## THE SHYNESS PROGRAM

The Shyness Program consists of several components that together help children become increasingly comfortable and effective in social situations.

- **Weekly Individual Sessions.** Children participate in weekly individual sessions that are tailored to the child's specific difficulties for approximately four months. During the sessions, the children engage in social tasks that are challenging but not overwhelming to help reduce their anxiety in a gradual fashion. These exercises help the child to gain confidence and social skill and eventually to find social situations rewarding. Psychoeducation, shaping techniques and positive reinforcement are used to promote successful social interactions.
- **Weekly Homework.** Homework assignments are developed with the children and parents to ensure that gains in the sessions are reinforced and generalize to natural settings. Homework is an essential component of the program and assignments are tailored to each child's specific needs.
- **Parent Education and Participation.** Through an intake session and a series of follow-up meetings with the program director, parents are provided with information on shyness and the latest research findings regarding strategies for helping shy children.
- **Group Sessions.** Group sessions are offered when possible based on the number and ages of the children participating in the program at any given time. The group consists of 12 weekly sessions and includes activities which help children learn about and practice specific social skills.

- **Consultation Services.** Consultation services are available as needed to help with specific problematic situations. For example, if a child does not speak in school, therapists can work with teachers to develop a plan of action.

### **HOW TO GET STARTED**

To set up an initial appointment to determine if your child could benefit from the program or to learn more about the program, contact Maria Zimmitti, Ph.D. & Associates at 202-333-6251.