

Social Anxiety Disorder

When Fear of Being Seen Fuels the Need to Self-Medicate

What is Social Anxiety Disorder?

Social Anxiety Disorder is a condition marked by intense, persistent fear of social situations where a person may be watched, judged, or embarrassed. This fear goes far beyond shyness, creating avoidance patterns that strain relationships, limit daily functioning, and leave the person increasingly isolated.



What Does It Look Like?

- **Avoidance of Social Situations**
They cancel plans, skip events, and withdraw rather than face the fear of judgment.
- **Intense Fear of Embarrassment**
Ordinary interactions feel high-stakes, as if every word will be scrutinized.
- **Physical Symptoms in Public**
Sweating, trembling, or nausea surface when they can't escape a social setting.
- **Reliance on Substances to Cope Socially**
A drink or a pill becomes the only way they can walk into a room.

How Does Panic Disorder Contribute to Relapse?

For someone with social anxiety disorder, substances become a tool that makes connection, conversation, and daily life feel more manageable.

- 1) **Substances Become a Social Crutch**
Alcohol or drugs quiet the fear long enough to function around other people.
- 2) **Short-Term Programs Depend on Group Processing**
Group therapy and 12-step meetings require social engagement that takes time to build.
- 3) **Untreated Anxiety Drives the Return to Use**
They leave treatment still afraid of people, returning to the isolation that fuels use.

Prevalence:

7.1% of U.S. adults in any given year¹

Co-Occurrence:

~20% develop a substance use disorder in their lifetime²

Relapse Risk:

2x higher risk of relapse when anxiety remains untreated³

Sources: ¹NIMH, Social Anxiety Disorder Statistics. ²Grant et al., NESARC: Prevalence and Co Occurrence of Substance Use Disorders and Independent Mood and Anxiety Disorders. Archives of General Psychiatry (2004) ³Agabio et al., Treatment of Comorbid Alcohol Dependence and Anxiety.

Long-Term Treatment for Social Anxiety Disorder and Addiction

Social anxiety disorder turns the core tools of recovery into obstacles. Group therapy, 12-step meetings, and peer accountability all require connection with other people. A short-term program doesn't provide enough time to build the trust and safety needed to engage.

Our **long-term, progress-based model** gives clients the extended exposure and clinical support to gradually rebuild their capacity for connection. Clients advance when they demonstrate genuine changes in how they show up in relationships and recovery, not when a calendar date arrives. anxiety in daily life.



“Social anxiety turns every group session into a threat. Clients spend the first months just learning to sit in a room without shutting down. You can't rush that process and expect lasting recovery.”



 **Meghan Bohlman, LPC-S, LCDC, EMDR-Trained**
Executive Clinical Director, Burning Tree Ranch

Dual Diagnosis Treatment for Social Anxiety Disorder

When social anxiety goes untreated, substances remain the only bridge to human connection. Without addressing both conditions, every social situation becomes a reason to use.

- **Treating Both Conditions Together**
Unaddressed social fear sustains dependence on substances to function.
- **Building Social Confidence Over Time**
Trust and group participation develop through practice, not instruction.
- **Providing Enough Time for Real Engagement**
Meaningful participation in recovery can't be forced in weeks.

Dual Diagnosis

The presence of both a **substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation's only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at www.BurningTree.com.

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