One of the most harmful responses to anxiety is avoidance. When a person avoids the source of their anxiety, they feel relief. However, the next time they face a similar situation, their anxiety will be worse.

**Safety behaviors** are subtle actions used to avoid anxiety in social situations. For example, someone who is anxious about socializing at a party might focus on their phone to discourage others from approaching. Although safety behaviors provide some relief, they make anxiety worse in the long run.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Anxiety** |  | **Safety Behaviors** |  | **Consequences** |
| * drawing attention to myself in groups
 |  | * speak very softly
* avoid eye contact
 |  | * temporary relief from anxiety
* difficulty making friends
* people think I’m unfriendly
* I never face my fear
 |

**Circle the safety behaviors you use to avoid social anxiety, or write your own.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| speak very little | speak very softly | hold arms stiffly at sides to prevent trembling |
| stand far from others to avoid conversation | avoid sharing personal information | avoid eye contact |
| constantly check appearance in mirror | obsess over appearance before socializing | come up with reasons to leave social event early |
| use drugs / alcohol | avoid eating in front of others | wear excessive makeup to hide blushing |
| avoid asking questions | excessively rehearse what to say before socializing | use distractions to appear busy (e.g. phone, TV) |
| talk excessively to avoid silences | lie or exaggerate to look better | continually seek reassurance or approval |
| cave to peer pressure or wishes of others |  |  |