

NPATS

Winter 2019

Northern Psychological Assessment and Treatment Service
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Hot Topic-Social Anxiety Disorder

Social Anxiety Disorder or Social Phobia is one of the most common anxiety conditions experienced in Australian society. It is characterised by an excessive fear of negative evaluation or judgement (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2003, 2013). More often than not the sufferer expects that they will be negatively perceived by others and they actively avoid new social situations. Social anxiety sufferers tend to avoid being the 'centre of attention', shying away from public speaking, presentations at work, or even applying for promotions at work. Their tendency to avoid drawing attention to themselves often leads them to be compromised in their personal, social and professional lives.

In a 12 month period, it is estimated that around 4% of the population experience this condition, and there is a lifetime risk of around 8% for developing this condition. Researchers such as Crome et al. (2015) identify it as a vulnerability factor for secondary disorders such as depression and substance use disorders (such as alcoholism). They also report that only around 20% of sufferers seek treatment, most commonly through their general practitioners.

In addition to pharmacological treatments, typically SSRI type antidepressant medications, psychological treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) have been found to have a positive treatment outcome. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for social anxiety includes relaxation training, cognitive restructuring and a systematic desensitization (incorporating exposure). Although 1:1 treatments are the most commonly available, group treatment for social phobia has also been found to have good treatment effects (see Heimberg et. al., 2002, and Nancy et al., 2009).

I personally believe this condition is likely to become more prevalent in our society, with the advent of technologies such as smartphones and internet addictions fuelling its prevalence. Making time to visit existing friends 'face to face' and remaining involved in local community groups and activities is a way that social anxiety sufferers can help themselves. – Lewi Yiolitis



Lewi Yiolitis

B. Sc. (Hons),
 M Psych. (Clinical) MAPS

Additions to the NPATS team

We are pleased to announce that two new psychologists have joined the NPATS team.

Mr Codie Nyhan joined NPATS a few months ago and has added to our capacity to better address mental health challenges experienced across all age ranges. Codie has had considerable experience working with children, adolescents, teenagers as well as adults for several years.

Codie has spent a number of years providing psychological assistance to students at schools in our local area as well as in community health settings. Codie also brings considerable group experience to NPATS and has already commenced his involvement in the NPATS group program.



Codie Nyhan

B.PsychSc, GDip(Psych),
 MProfPsych

Additions to the NPATS team cont'd.

More recently, Josie Catania has joined the NPATS team.

Josie has extensive experience in the public and private mental health sector over the last 10 years and has specialist skills in both high and low prevalence conditions.

Josie is a recognised specialist in eating disorders, consulting to therapists and GP's on interventions for such conditions. She also maintains excellent skills in assessment and treatment of more common conditions such as panic, generalised anxiety and depression. In addition to CBT interventions, she is also trained in schema therapy and is a recognised AHPRA clinical supervisor.

For more information about Codie and Josie please see our website: npats.com.au



Josie Catania

B. Arts (Psych) G. Dip (Psych),
M Psych. (Clinical) MAPS, endorsed
Clinical Supervisor through AHPRA

Group Therapy Program

The NPATS group therapy program recommenced over the last month and has been well received by attendees.

The importance of being able to share the journey to recovery from debilitating mental health difficulties (such as anxiety and depression), with others who understand such challenges is typically empowering and motivating. The importance of social connectedness cannot be underestimated in recovering from any mental health challenge.

For involvement in our group sessions, please ensure referrals are in the name of 'NPATS group program'.

Over the coming months, a social anxiety group therapy program will be commenced by Lewi Yiolitis. Lewi has extensive experience in the assessment and treatment of social anxiety both in 1:1 sessions as well as in group settings.

NPATS will also offer a Secondary School Students Stress and Anxiety Group Program commencing in coming months. This will be facilitated by Codie Nyhan and incorporates aspects of CBT, mindfulness and general relaxation training.

For enquiries about our group programs please contact reception on (03) 9350 1757 or email at reception@npats.com.au

Departure

Ms Rosemary McDonough will be finishing up at NPATS in June 2019. We are sorry to see her go, and acknowledge the valuable contributions she made to the mental health and well-being of patients treated at NPATS.

References

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th ed. American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th ed. (2013), Arlington, VA.

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Nancy, L., Kocovski, J., Fleming, N., Rector, A (2009) Mindfulness and Acceptance-Based Group therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder: An open trial. Cognitive and Behavioural Practice, Vol 16(3), pp 276-289.