Meet Ruth who experienced an anxiety problem called social anxiety disorder

Ruth felt anxious and uncomfortable when she had to speak to new people or be in social situations like parties. She also didn’t like eating in front of other people. This became particularly difficult when she started university, had to make new friends and eat in her catered halls of residence. She also had to give presentations to her peers as part of her course assessments and found this too anxiety provoking to do. She would try and manage her anxiety by avoiding these things. Avoiding things gave her some initial relief from her anxiety in the short term, but in the longer term it maintained her anxiety keeping her in a vicious cycle. As a result she was really isolated and behind on her studies. She used an evidence based approach called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to successfully help with her difficulties.

Ruth’s physical symptoms
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Going red in the face

Ruth’s altered thoughts
- “People will find me boring”
- “People will notice my sweating and think I’m disgusting”
- “If others see how anxious I am they will think badly of me”

Ruth’s behaviours
- Avoiding social situations
- Avoiding eating in front of other people
- Wearing extra concealer to avoid looking red in the face
- Using lots of deodorant and wearing dark clothes to disguise her sweating
- Avoiding eye contact
- Buying food out instead of eating in halls

© Chellingsworth, M., 2016.