



THE SHY CHILD

*Helping shy kids become
more socially confident*

Unable to summon the courage to join classmates building a snowman, your son observes from the sidewalk. Despite the new neighbor's warm personality, she could not elicit the slightest response from your daughter. Scenarios like these may evoke frustration for parents . . . and children. Take heart – others have journeyed this path and offer helpful advice.

A new perspective

Americans often equate shyness with indifference, yet many cultures extol its positive virtues – introspection, intelligence and thoughtfulness. It can be helpful to establish a healthy interpretation of shyness within your family. Ohio native Shelley L. bore the “shy label” growing up. Today she empowers her children as they negotiate this quiet, contemplative trait. “We use the word ‘introverted’; people seem to understand that some individuals are extroverts and others introverts – accepting this as a personality difference rather than a negative.” A favorable perspective invites more candid dialogue between parent and child. “Shy children don’t need to be changed, they need to be valued,” says Shelley.

Telling temperaments

“Shyness is usually part of a child’s innate temperament, something they are born with,” shares Julia Anixt, MD, Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician at the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. “This trait is often more distressing to the parent than the child, especially if a parent is very outgoing and sociable. Most shy children do well with relationships and new situations if given time to adjust and warm up to the environment and others around them.” Shy children follow their natural instincts when anxiety arises, cautiously evaluating how to handle uncomfortable situations. Parents however, can teach them strategies to help relieve their anxiety and facilitate social success.

Respond supportively

Children notice how others react to their shyness and parents should help kids determine their underlying fears, rather than respond with criticism. By showing patience and encouragement instead of frustration and shame, parents help build self-esteem. Be mindful of word, tone, body language and facial