

11 Little Tricks to Stop Being Socially Awkward

Even the most confident communicators can sometimes feel insecure at a party, meeting, or other friendly get-together. Use these pro tips to summon your swagger, or at least feel more self-assured.

BY ERICA LAMBERG

Play host



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Put yourself more at ease by taking the lead socially. "Introduce people to each other," suggests Dianna Booher, author of *How to Be the Life of the Party*. "Take hats and coats and invite other guests to help themselves to the food." People will appreciate your thoughtfulness, and you'll always find yourself in the center of things because people will be "coming and going" all around you. Check out the habits that can help nix social anxiety.

Bring a buddy



ISTOCK/SKYNESHER

By attending events with a friend, you get the opportunity to introduce your pal to small groups as you join them, offering an intriguing "tag line" about them. "Your buddy can return the favor in your introduction," Booher says. "These 'partner' introductions seem much less intrusive and self-serving

and give you an interesting way to connect with others." Don't miss these tips for sharpening your small talk skills.

Embrace an opportunity



ISTOCK/TODOR TSVETKOV

Stretching yourself beyond your comfort zone often has a real payoff. The fact is that trying new experiences, even if you have to endure a bit of discomfort, can lead to personal growth and inner strength, according to recent [Psychology Today](#) article. If you're feeling lonely, try some of these strategies for making a human connection.

Make a fashion statement



ISTOCK/CATHERINE LANE

A standout piece of jewelry, wild shoes or a unique jacket can serve as an immediate conversation starter, because most people will comment on it. "And when others ask, 'What's this?' or 'What's the story behind this piece?' be ready with an intriguing line that makes them say, 'Tell me more,'" Booher says. Check out these secrets to accessorizing, according to fashion stylists.

Learn to listen intently



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If it's not already obvious, people love to talk about themselves. Use that your advantage to keep a conversation flowing. "Just keep asking follow-up questions and show genuine interest," she says. Check out the things all good listeners do daily.

Remember names



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To earn respect from a new acquaintance, remember and then use that person's name. "There are many techniques to help you remember," says Daniel L. Kopp, MD, a family physician in New Hartford, New York. "Try associating the name or the person's appearance with something that you can easily connect it to." The most important thing you can do in remembering names, however, is to listen very carefully as you're hearing it the first time, perhaps even repeating it to confirm that you heard it correctly. You can say, "Amanda, nice to meet you." "Often, social nervousness has us so focused on what we're going to say next that we're not tuning in to the name given at all," Dr. Kopp says.

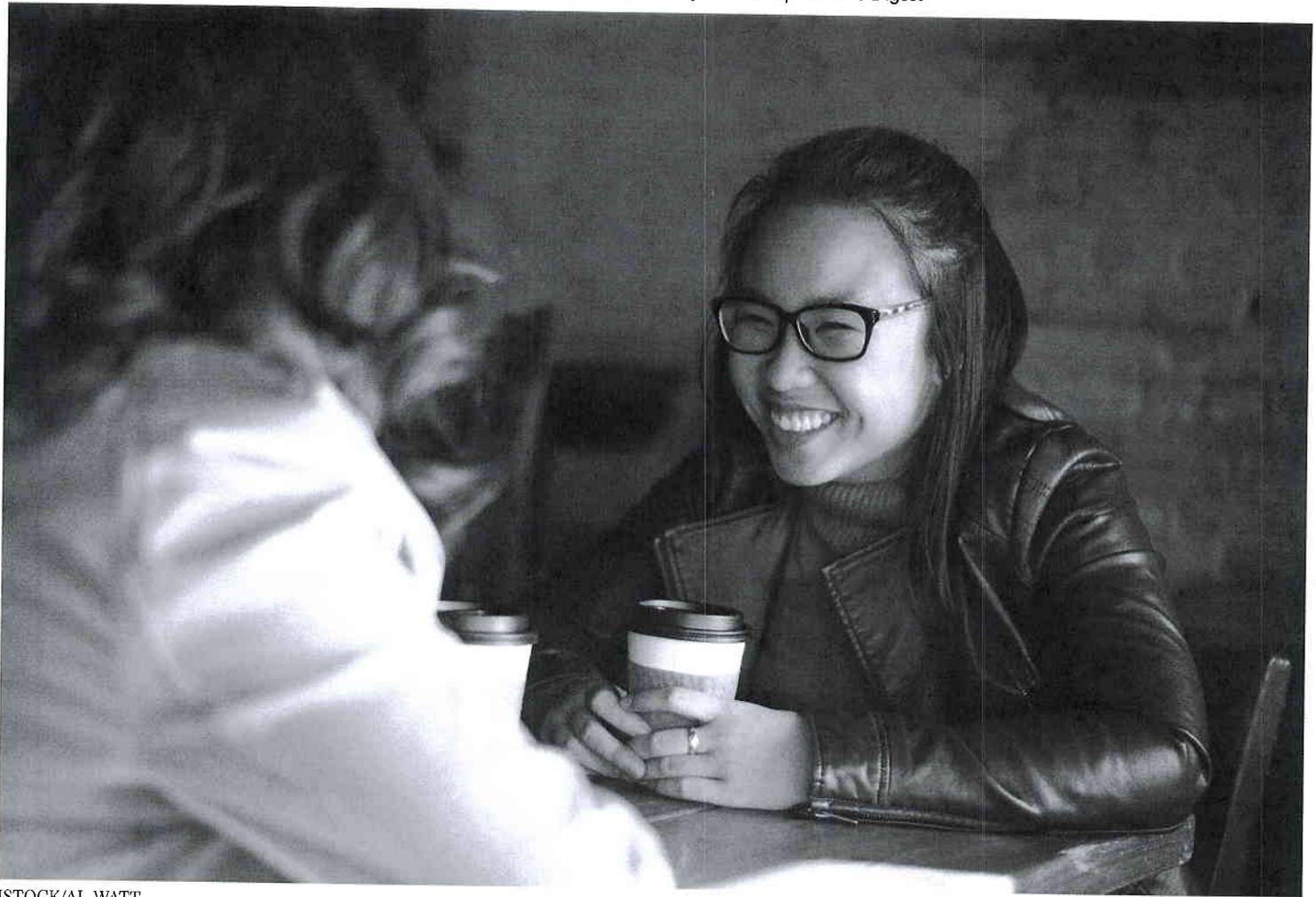
Be humble



ISTOCK/GRADYREESE

Resist the urge to initiate conversations by bragging or just generally talking too much about yourself. "Think to yourself: 'I'm a very interesting person and have done many interesting things, but I don't need to tell others about my experiences unless they're truly interested,'" Dr. Kopp says. "Quiet confidence is almost always valued more than aggressive domination or monopolization of a conversation," he adds. Check these signs you could be a bad listener.

Take stock of your best traits



ISTOCK/AJ_WATT

Before entering a social situation—whether it's in person or online—take a moment to reflect on your best qualities and characteristics and remind yourself that you're a good and decent person, deserving of another's friendship, Dr. Kopp says. This strategy will be confidence builder. If you're meeting in person, don't forget that your body language is another way to project confidence.

Have one great fact ready



ISTOCK/ZORANM

Kimberly Friedmutter, a clinical hypnotherapist with a practice in Malibu, California, says offering up a tidbit about yourself opens the doors to a flowing conversation. "Keep an interesting go-to fact about yourself at the ready," Freidmutter says. "People love to engage with a quip, a story, something interesting for an icebreaker." It could be something as random as, "I'm parked at a one-hour meter, so if you see me dash out suddenly, that would be why!"

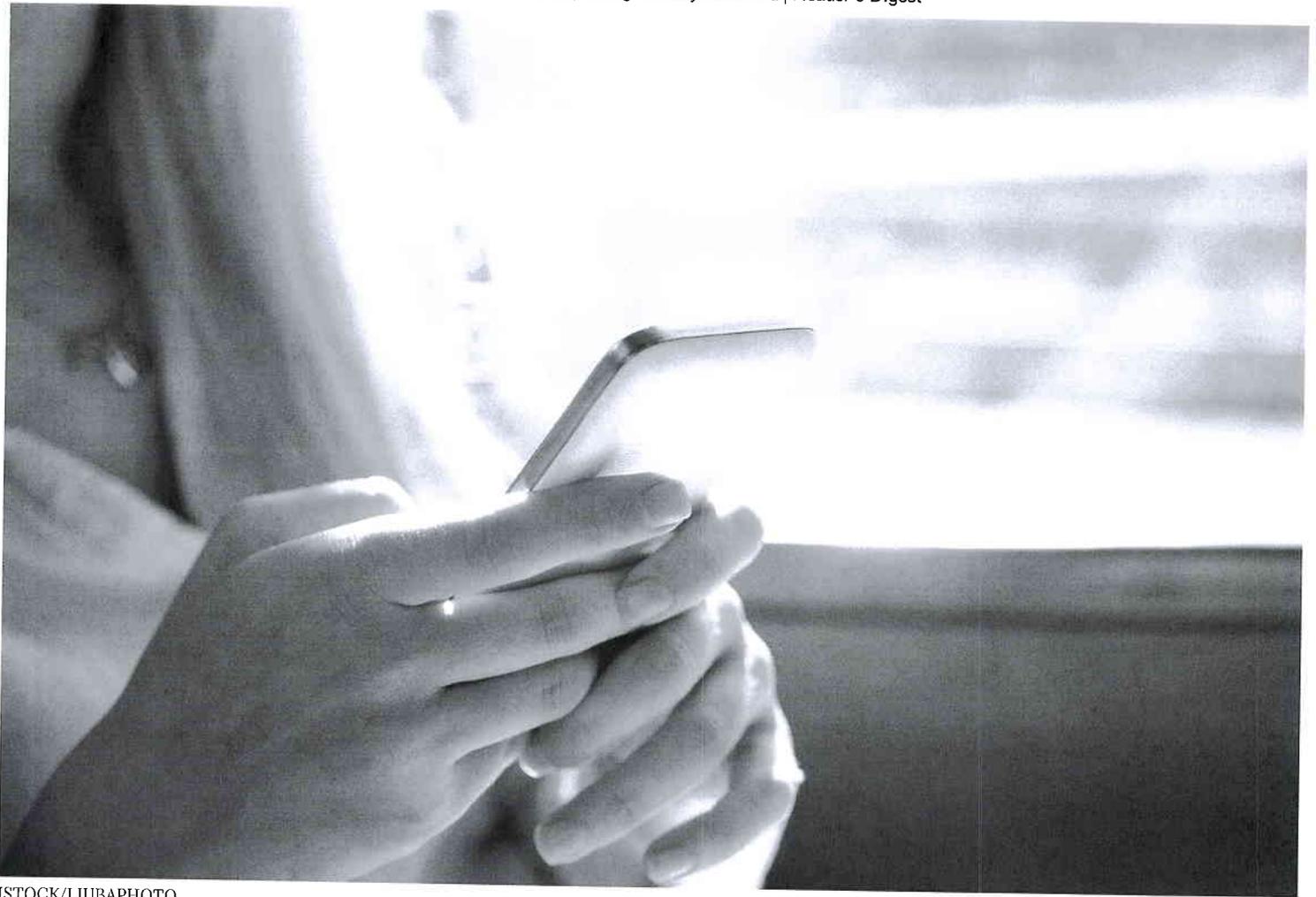
Create some imagery



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Take the edge off a social situation by using your imagination. "When feeling awkwardly intimidated, simply look at those around you and imagine how they looked as children," says Friedmutter. "The image you conjure in your mind will automatically relax you into approaching others without worry."

Consider texting more



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Studies have found that friends and partners who send affectionate messages are closer than their non-texting equivalents, according to an article in the [Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology](#). Get familiar with the situations in which texting has the advantage over calling.