When dating feels anxious

First contact: when saying hello feels difficult



You may want to meet someone and still dread approaching them or sending the first message. Worries about rejection, blushing or going blank can make that first step feel large. These optional ideas include support for dating with social anxiety. Choose what fits; you do not have to date. [1]
This sheet includes words you can borrow, because talking with someone you trust, or with a professional, can make difficult things feel more manageable.

1 Choose a small opening in a welcoming setting

Try a greeting after a shared activity, a brief question, or a message on a dating app where contact is welcome. Choose a moment when the person is free to respond or decline. Keep it small and relevant to the setting. [1]

Two openings you could adapt

In person, after a class: "Hi, how did you find today's class?" On a dating app: "Hi, I noticed you enjoy walking. Do you have a favourite place?" Use words that feel like you; these are examples, not lines you need to memorise.

2 Give yourself room to be a little nervous

Notice a prediction such as, "If I blush, they will think badly of me." A prediction is not a fact. You could practise a brief greeting without rehearsing every possible reply. Return attention to their words when you notice yourself monitoring how you look or sound. [1, 5]

3 Leave room for the other person's choice

Pause and let them respond. If they decline, seem busy or disengage, a simple "No problem - have a good day" is enough. If a message gets no reply, leave space; avoid repeated messages or switching channels to pursue an answer. A greeting never creates an obligation to continue.

Disappointment can hurt. One person's response cannot sum up your worth. You can seek company, do something ordinary, or take a break. Keep communication aids, sensory accommodations and genuine safety measures; confidence does not require giving these up.

One small opening I might choose

Optional: think it through or make a private note.

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Meeting and afterwards

Curiosity, boundaries and a fairer review

Make a plan you can choose freely

A short coffee in a familiar public place may suit you. Tell someone you trust your plan and keep a way to leave. You could ask, "Would a short coffee somewhere quiet suit you?" You can change your mind. [2]

Let the conversation be a conversation

Ask something you are curious about and listen to the answer. A pause or stumbled sentence can be part of ordinary conversation. You do not owe eye contact, private disclosures or unwanted closeness. [1]

Review briefly, then return to your day

Ask: What did I enjoy? Did I feel respected? What would I like next? If you start replaying every sentence, put the review aside. A reply delay leaves uncertainty. You can express interest or decline another meeting clearly and kindly. [1, 5]

Safety and consent come first

Respect a no, a change of mind or a wish to stop. Coercion, intimidation or violence call for specialist support. After sexual violence, support is available: in Ireland, the National Rape Crisis Helpline is 1800 77 8888; elsewhere, findahelpline.com lists sexual-abuse support by country. [3]

If anxiety keeps limiting your life, a GP (family doctor) or qualified therapist can help assess what you need. NICE recommends individual CBT developed for social anxiety disorder. This sheet is not a complete treatment. Urgent mental health concerns: contact your GP, an out-of-hours doctor or your mental health team; immediate danger: emergency services. [1, 4, 5]

Sources and further reading

1. HSE: Social anxiety (www2.hse.ie)
2. Garda: Meeting people online safely (www.garda.ie)
3. Dublin Rape Crisis Centre: Consent (www.drcc.ie)
4. HSE: Urgent mental health support (www2.hse.ie)
5. NICE CG159: Social anxiety recommendations (www.nice.org.uk)

Original examples, not a tested dating intervention or diagnostic tool. Sources checked 7 October 2026. No organisational endorsement implied. Support lines checked 25 October 2026.

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