



ARE YOU A KITCHEN GODDESS?

By Deborah Ross

Faced with blackened ovenware, do you:

- a) Soak, then scour immediately.
- b) Soak overnight, then scour.
- c) Soak, think about scouring, soak more, then throw away when nobody is looking.

You come in late after a hard day. Your family needs feeding. Do you:

- a) Gladly produce a family meal.
- b) Produce a family meal, but begrudgingly, with much pan-banging.
- c) Produce a family meal, begrudgingly, with much pan-banging, and then serve with an icy, "Happy now?" and your own body weight in alcohol.

When food falls on the floor, you:

- a) Bin it immediately.
- b) Bin it, but not before dithering a bit.
- c) Re-serve, particularly if nobody's looking.

In extremis, you have:

- a) Used ready-made pastry.
- b) Made Nescafé using the hot tap.
- c) Defrosted a chicken in the bath.

At least one kitchen cupboard contains:

- a) Spices, ordered alphabetically.
- b) Funny teas, although how they got there or whoever drinks them is anyone's guess.
- c) A tin of treacle with half-cocked lid; exotic chutneys and pickles that seemed like a good idea at the time (40 years ago); a spilling bag of some decade-old pulse (lentils?); something that can't be identified, but is very gluey and has a bit of old moth wing stuck to it.

With leftovers, you:

- a) Decant into Tupperware and use next day.
- b) Decant into Tupperware, place in the fridge and use during the week.
- c) Decant into Tupperware, place in the freezer for a decade or so, then throw out when nobody is looking.

ANSWERS

Mostly A's You're the human equivalent of a stainless-steel work surface without smears.

Mostly B's There is still hope, although you might want to deal with that fish finger embedded in the ice of the freezer wall?

Mostly C's You only truly come into your own when nobody is looking. Bravo.

DO YOU SUFFER FROM SOCIAL ANXIETY?

Social anxiety is an intense, recurrent, obsessive preoccupation with the possibility of being negatively evaluated in social situations. The OCD Centre of Los Angeles has devised this questionnaire in an effort to help you get a better idea of whether or not you are exhibiting symptoms. Simply tick those statements that apply to you. It is not meant to replace a thorough evaluation, but may help in identifying traits of social anxiety/phobia.

1. I often feel very insecure, anxious or uncomfortable in social situations.
2. I am often afraid I will appear foolish, stupid or socially inept.
3. I often worry that I will say or do something wrong or inappropriate, or that I will commit some sort of social error.
4. I am often afraid others will notice my shortcomings or find fault with me, or form an unfavourable opinion of me.
5. I become upset, anxious and/or depressed when I think someone disapproves of me.
6. It is very difficult for me to initiate a conversation or approach others having a conversation.
7. I become anxious when others ask me personal questions or if I am the centre of attention.
8. When I am talking to someone, I am often distracted by wondering what they are thinking of me.
9. I often believe others are thinking negative thoughts about me in social situations.
10. I often believe others are discussing me or commenting on me in social situations.
11. I worry excessively about my physical appearance in social situations.
12. I sometimes don't go to work or school because I am too socially uncomfortable.
13. I chose my job partly because it would require minimal social interaction.
14. I avoid looking for new work for fear of being negatively evaluated.
15. I avoid speaking to co-workers or superiors for fear of being negatively evaluated.
16. I avoid speaking to "important people" or people with strong personalities for fear of being negatively evaluated.
17. I avoid speaking in class, at work meetings or in group discussions for fear of being negatively evaluated.
18. I avoid speaking to strangers, shop assistants, waiters, etc, for fear of being negatively evaluated.
19. I avoid public speaking for fear of being negatively evaluated.
20. I avoid dating due to my fear of being negatively evaluated.
21. I often avoid social engagements, parties, weddings, conferences, etc, and/or leave these events early, due to my social discomfort.
22. I avoid eating, drinking, reading or using a telephone in public, or using public toilets.
23. I am often afraid that people will notice that I am blushing, sweating, trembling, or showing other signs of anxiety.
24. My concerns about social evaluation are interfering with my relationships and/or with my academic or professional functioning.

Evaluate your responses

1 to 3 ticks: You worry you are being negatively evaluated, but these concerns don't significantly affect your life.

4 to 7 ticks: You experience a moderately high amount of distress in some situations. You avoid some situations as a result.

More than 7 ticks: There is a high probability that you have social anxiety/phobia. You may have a great deal of distress related to certain situations, and possibly avoid those situations frequently.

For an in-depth analysis of social anxiety, go to ocdla.com/socialphobia.html. If you are worried, seek professional advice →

