UNIVERSITY OF Reading

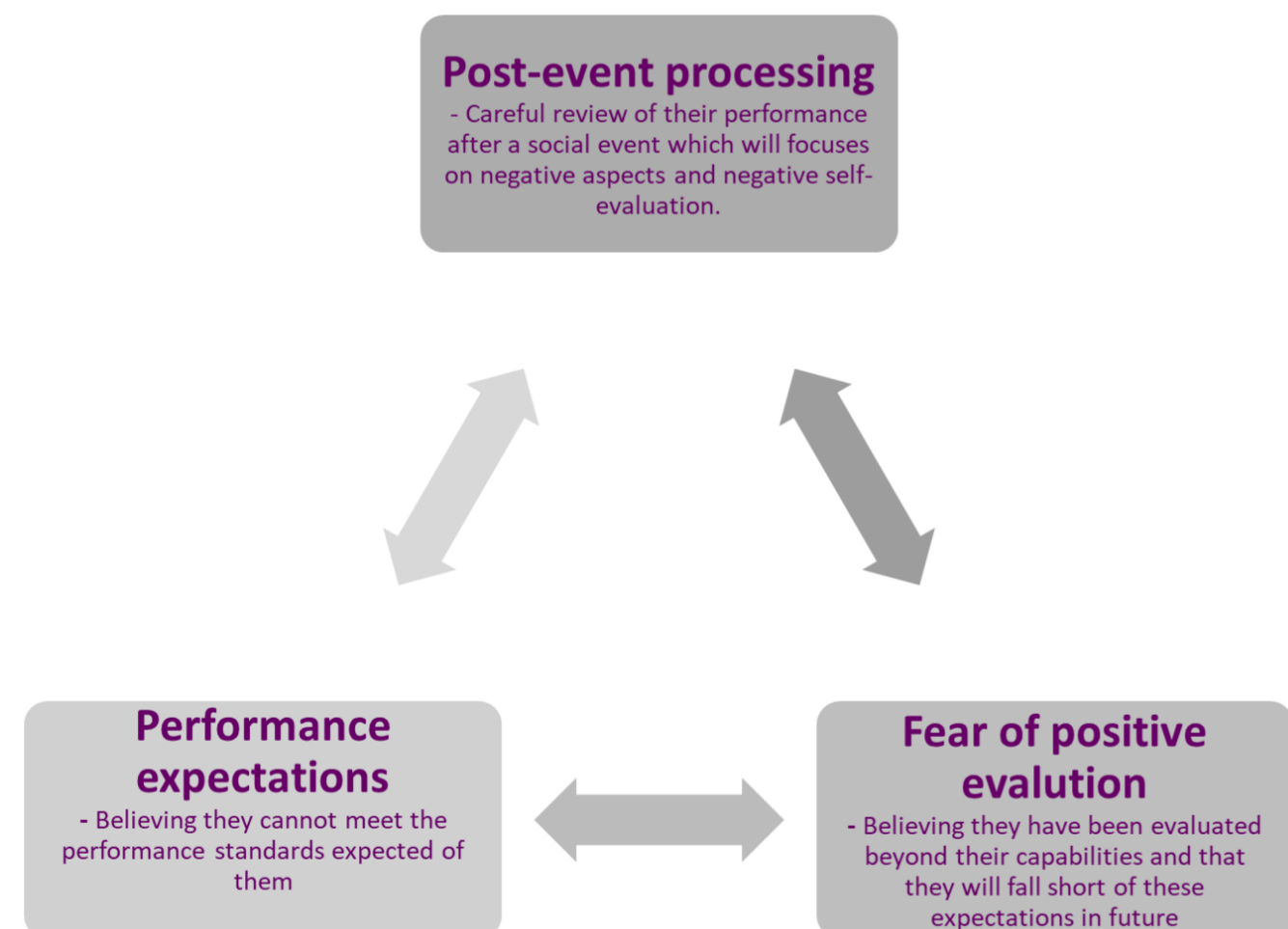# How Does What People Say To Us Change How We Feel?

Ruth Webster | Alannah McDaid |

What is Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)?

- Social Anxiety Disorder is characterised by an intense fear of social situations, such as giving a speech or having a conversation.

- People with SAD feel significant anxiety in these situations because they fear the scrutiny of others, primarily worrying that they will do or say something to humiliate or embarrass themselves.

- This fear can result in those with Social Anxiety avoiding social situations altogether, which limits their daily functioning.

- Social Anxiety is common among both adults and children:

  - Social Anxiety affects an estimated 12% of adults and 3-6% of children.

Maintaining the disorder

- SAD often does not get better over time without treatment. Clark and Wells (1995) proposed several reasons why this may happen- including how people respond to positive feedback:

Post-event processing
- Careful review of their performance after a social event which will focuses on negative aspects and negative self-evaluation.

Performance expectations
- Believing they cannot meet the performance standards expected of them

Fear of positive evalution
- Believing they have been evaluated beyond their capabilities and that they will fall short of these expectations in future

- Currently, we don't know much about how these mechanisms maintain social anxiety in children and adolescents as most of the research focuses on adults.

The current study

- This research aims to find out if young people experience the same thoughts and behaviours as adults with SAD.

- So far, little research has looked at how Social Anxiety is maintained in children and adolescents.

- Similarly, few studies have looked at the differences in maintenance mechanisms between children and teenagers. Considering the developmental changes that occur during adolescence, research that focuses on children alone may not be applicable to all young people.

We expect that children and adolescents with high social anxiety will have more negative expectations about their performance prior to the speech task than those with low social anxiety.

We expect to see a difference between the two age groups, with adolescents being influenced more by positive feedback than children.

We expect that the type of feedback young people receive will influence how participants rate their performance and how much they experience PEP (i.e. we expect high anxiety will make participants rate their performance as worse and experience more PEP when they receive positive feedback.
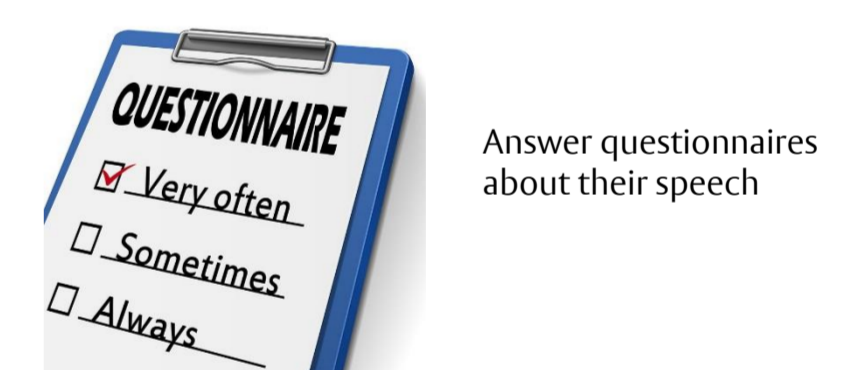
- **Participants:**
  - 62 children (aged 8-9) and 62 teenagers (aged 14-15) from Berkshire and Hampshire Schools.

- **Measures:**
  - Young people will fill in a variety of questionnaires to rate performance expectations and anxiety levels.

- **Procedure**

Phase 1:   **Phase 2:** (1 week later)

Watch a short video of a speech

Answer questionnaires about their anxiety

Give a short speech of their own

Answer questionnaires about their anxiety

Positive or neutral feedback about the quality of their speech

Answer questionnaires about their speech

Positive feedback	Neutral feedback
- I think it was a good speech. - You held my attention during your speech.	- You kept to the time. - I learnt something new about your hobby.

References
1. Clark, D. M., & Wells, A. (1995). A cognitive model of social phobia. Social phobia: Diagnosis, assessment, and treatment, 41(68), 00022-3.
2. Chavira, D. A., Stein, M. B., Bailey, K., & Stein, M. T. (2004). Child anxiety in primary care: prevalent but untreated. *Depression and anxiety*, 20(4), 155-164.
3. Kessler, R. C., Chiu, W. T., Demler, O., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of 12-month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of general psychiatry*, 62(6), 617-627.

Contact information
- Department of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences, University of Reading, Whiteknights, RG6 6AH
- Email: r.m.webster@student.reading.ac.uk, a.k.mcdaid@student.reading.ac.uk |