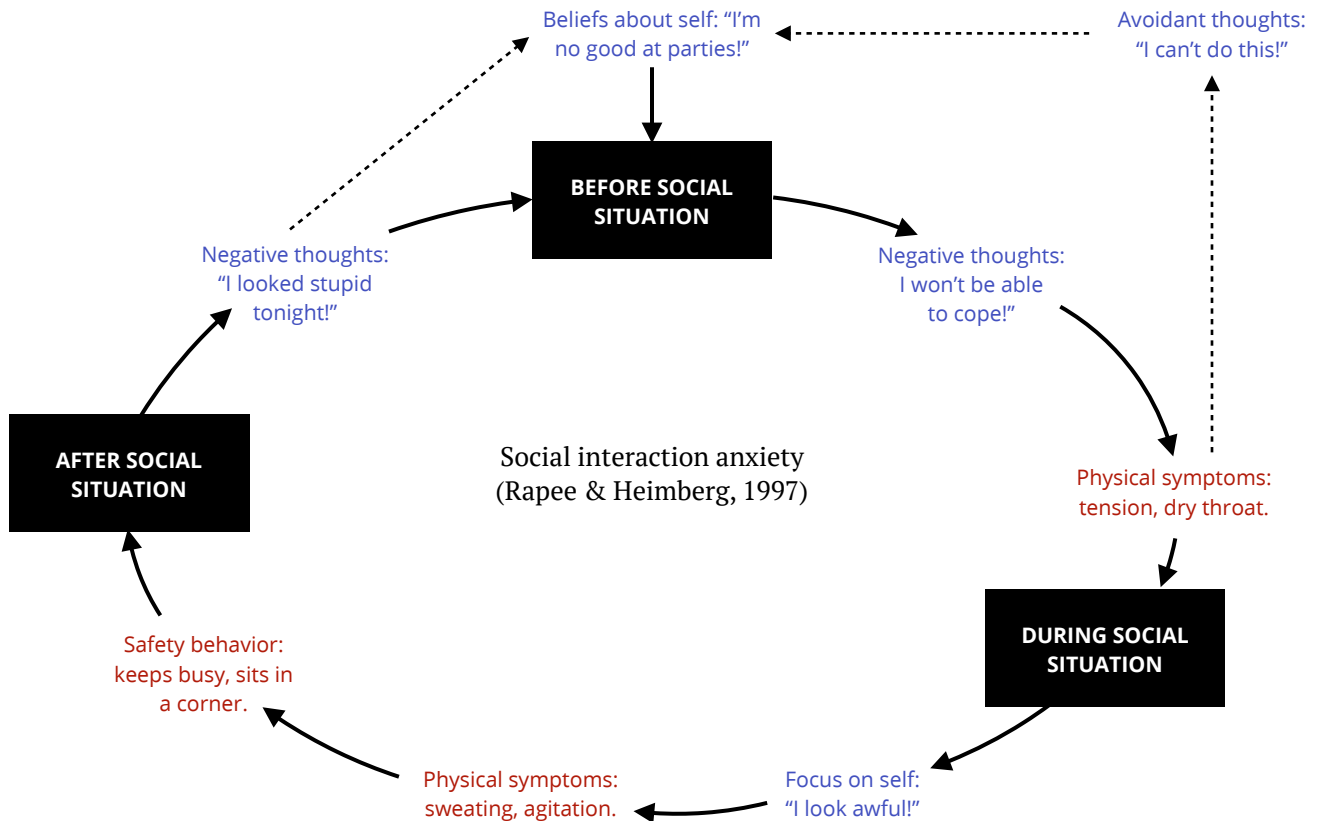


Initiating conversations with strangers

Studies show that most of us are more than happy to speak with strangers, and even feel happier when we've done so. We also believe, however, that strangers wouldn't want to talk with us. Consequently, most potential conversations never get started. For some, striking up a conversation with someone new is a frightening prospect. The anxiety that results is a complex dance of thoughts and physical symptoms.



Fortunately, starting a conversation with a stranger doesn't have to be difficult. The following template, *A-R-E*, can help develop confidence in social situations and reduce the symptoms of anxiety (Fleming, 2010).

- A NCHOR** Drop an anchor in your "mutually shared reality" *"Great turnout, huh?"*
- R EVEAL** Reveal something related about yourself. *"I was a bit disappointed in last year's crowd. This is way better!"*
- E NCOURAGE** Encourage them with a suitable question. *"Were you here last year, too, or is this your first time?"*