Do you have any tips for how to make social interactions less uncomfortable?

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When a person is feeling particularly depressed or having frequent panic attacks, it can make it hard to be around people. Do you have any tips for how to make social interactions less uncomfortable?

First of all, you should focus on small, low-key situations with mellow people. It's not wise to spend time with people who are going to be asking lots of questions.

One good suggestion would be to spend time with another person where talking isn't necessary, such as going to a movie. If this is one of the first outings after becoming isolated, it's a good idea to sit at the end of the aisle, where it's easy to get up and leave if things get too intense. In fact, having an escape plan, and making sure that leaving is okay with the person you're hanging out with, is really important. It has to always be okay to leave if you feel uncomfortable. Another suggestion is to meet someone at the location where you'll be hanging out. Drive yourself. Don't be dependent on someone else. And don't try to take on too much all at once. Take baby steps.

Answered by: Gail Tager, she is a marriage and family therapist from Sierra Madre, California, with two decades of experience. Here, she answers five of the most common questions regarding mental health, ranging from how to find the best therapist to how to figure out when and whom to tell others about your struggles.

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