



Overcoming Sexual Anxiety: 5 CBT Tools for Gay Men

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Building Sexual Confidence

Now that we've reviewed our sexual development and examined our arousal templates in parts 1 and 2, it's time to shift our focus toward the future by identifying our **sexual ideal**.

Your sexual ideal is your best sexual self. It's the way you'd like to experience sex—fully, authentically, and with confidence. Where do we start? By working through anxiety around sex. Here's the truth: most gay men experience anxiety around sex. It doesn't matter how good-looking you are or how many likes you get on Instagram—we all get nervous. Why? Because sex requires vulnerability. You're literally exposing yourself, putting yourself out there to be seen, judged, and received in real time. That level of exposure can trigger insecurity.

So yes, building sexual confidence is easier said than done. Like any aspect of personal growth, it takes time, effort, and patience. The process will look different for everyone, but it is possible. To help you start, here are **five ways gay men can begin to discover their sexual ideal**. These tools

borrow from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) which focuses on changing your thinking (cognition) and actions (behavior).

1. Find a point of confidence.

- ☐ What are you good at? Maybe it's your physical appearance, a particular skill, or even your energy and presence. Whatever it is, identify a focal point to anchor your confidence. Make it tangible and real, so you have something solid to return to when doubts creep in.

2. Challenge cognitive distortions.

- ☐ One of the biggest myths is that some people are simply "good" in bed. The truth? Great sex is about chemistry between two people, not about flawless performance. Many insecurities stem from rigid beliefs about sexual performance. Shifting your perspective can free you from unnecessary pressure.

3. Stop focusing on performance.

- ☐ You're not a porn star—and you're not supposed to be. Sex isn't about putting on a show; it's about connection and enjoyment. Focus on fun, exploration, and even being a little selfish. And most importantly, allow yourself to be imperfect. Confidence grows when you stop equating sex with performance.

4. Don't rely on substances.

- ☐ A lot of men use alcohol or drugs to heighten their sexual experiences. While that may feel fun in the moment, it doesn't actually help build lasting confidence. In fact, it can undermine it. Why? Because any "success" you have under the influence doesn't feel fully authentic. Long-term confidence comes from sober, real experiences.

5. Give yourself permission to be sexual.

- ☐ This might sound obvious, but many gay men still carry shame or hesitation around their sexuality. Ask yourself: Do I truly like my sexuality? Do I feel free to explore it? Or does it feel like a burden or a source of frustration? Granting yourself full permission to embrace your sexuality is a critical step toward discovering your ideal.