

For Immediate Release
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“Pee Buddies” Yep, they’re a thing.

Shy Bladder support group forms in Denver.

Denver, CO, USA (September 16, 2021) — Hidden mental health disabilities have taken center stage. Studies show that nearly 21 million Americans suffer from the social anxiety disorder known as **paruresis (par-you-re-sis) or shy bladder syndrome**. In the Denver Area that means more than 200,000 people are affected. Paruresis is a phobia in which **a person is unable to urinate in the real or imaginary presence of others**. To help those with paruresis nearby, the International Paruresis Association (IPA) is sponsoring a Denver Paruresis Support Group which joins existing groups in Colorado Springs and Fort Collins.

The group will be led by IPA Co-Founder and Senior Advisor, Dr. Steven Soifer, Ph. D. LCSW-C. “I used to think I was all alone in dealing with this phobia. Helping others has become my life’s work.” Groups get together to share stories and provide moral support as people are on their daily walk with Paruresis. Meetings can be remote, and oftentimes, face-to-face in public venues. “Yes, that means we’ll load up on fluids and practice with our ‘pee buddies’ nearby. These practice sessions are technically ‘Cognitive Behavioral Therapy’ that diminishes the body’s uncontrollable ‘lock up.’” A program of graduated exposure to the fear is the tried-and-true way of overcoming this phobia. The IPA has seen so many lives improved through these groups.

Paruresis affects sufferers in many ways. It can be triggered in men or women by just one unfortunate bullying, abuse, or bathroom incident. It then builds as one matures resulting in a wide variety of avoidant behaviors: re-arranging lives for fear of not having a private or “safe” area to use the bathroom, turning down travel or work opportunities, risking severe dehydration by not consuming fluids during the day. Because of the shame associated with this phobia, many sufferers never tell anyone including their closest family members. Simply hearing the IPA’s message “You are not alone!” has comforted thousands of people in the IPA’s history. Participating in a support group with others who are afflicted is life changing.

Headquartered in Catonsville, Maryland, the IPA is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its founding. Soifer added, “We are so happy to re-start our live, in-person support groups across the country. Our remote, virtual offerings have been a tremendous hit worldwide, but nothing can substitute for actual practice and connecting with others. While sufferers had a great time hiding at home during COVID, our participants realize it’s time to work on this phobia as they venture out.”

For anyone interested in joining or starting a local support group, more information can be found at the IPA’s support page: <https://paruresis.org/support-groups/>. Weekend workshops led by licensed therapists are also open for registration across the USA. Contact the IPA at getinfo@paruresis.org.

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