

Case Study

Imagine you arrive at a friend's house for a meal and find the room full of people you do not know. There is a pause in the conversation as you walk in and you think: 'Everyone is looking at me'. This makes you nervous, so you leap at the offer of a drink but feel hot and conspicuous when someone asks you your name. You think: 'They must all have noticed how nervous I am', as you avoid catching anyone's eye and look round for somewhere to put your drink down in case it spills. You wonder if you will ever be able to think of anything to say and start to feel uncomfortably hot. The louder people talk the more you think 'I really don't belong here', and 'Nothing I could think of to say would interest these people'. This makes it harder for you to join in the conversation, so you keep quiet and retreat into your shell, aware of how inept you must seem in other people's eyes. You look out for a way of leaving early, hoping that you can slip away without drawing too much attention to yourself.

The next day you can't stop thinking about how you must have appeared to the other people there. Images come to mind that bring back all the embarrassment and nervousness that you felt at the time.