

Spice of Life

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I used to get embarrassed very easily during my childhood and youth. My parents were very strict disciplinarians so I became very conscience of how I looked and behaved in front of others. I was expected to greet the guests in the living room and then disappear. Sometimes when asked to come and sit with special guests, I didn't know where to look, what to do with my hands and what to talk. That made me completely ill at ease in front of others. I remember one time accidentally entering the powder room where a female guest was fixing her bra. I couldn't face her ever again. Ironically, she was fine but I felt embarrassed in her presence. This kind of behavior and feeling of shame continued

till my school years and college. That was a very uncomfortable feeling to say the least.

Now that I have overcome and overgrown the negative emotion of easily feeling embarrassed, sometimes I try to think about my years of living with self-inflicted shame. The root of embarrassment was the anticipation of negative evaluation by others that included my parents' friends, teachers and my supervisors.

In my youth I particularly felt awkward in presence of girls who had no qualms about conversing with me. Then I came to the USA where women rubbed shoulders with

men in every field. I felt no inhibitions in talking to them or working alongside with them. I was busy raising a family and keeping a job that, probably, stopped me from feeling embarrassed easily. As a matter of fact, I spent the whole of my teens and my 20s in a state of permanent embarrassment.

My barber once asked me, "What do you do for living?"

"Nothing and how 'bout you?"

"I am a barber," he replied. I was embarrassed for asking such a stupid question.

Once I was at the airport when the TSA agent asked me to put my license face down. I didn't hear the license part so I put my face down on the scanner. Everyone laughed.

When I first joined General Motors, my neighbor, Mary asked me to water her plant every day while she was gone on vacation. I followed her instruction but everyone laughed at me. Later I found out that it was an artificial plant. I knew it was a set up when my colleagues gathered around and laughed at me.

I analyzed the reasons for my embarrassment and concluded that they were mainly due to the fear of not meeting others' expectations and ruminating past mistakes. As I aged, I learned my lesson. I hardly feel bashful now in any situation. If I do, I take that as the spice of life."