

# Blushing

*Blushing is an automatic physiological response that is controlled by your body's fight or flight system. When you are embarrassed your body releases adrenaline which, among other things, causes your blood vessels to open. This allows more blood to flow into your cheeks and the result is a rosy blush (Clark, 2008).*

## Causes of blushing

Blushing can be triggered for any number of reasons, and is often a big problem for people who have social anxiety disorder. It can happen when we are embarrassed, scared, surprised or uncomfortable in certain social situations.

## Fear of blushing keeps blushing alive

It is our perception of what is happening that makes our bodies respond the way it does. If we get worried, or scared that we may blush then our brain is focused on blushing and it may happen more frequently. The anticipation or expectation of blushing can lead to more blushing.

This fear can happen for a number of reasons related to social anxiety:

- Potential embarrassment or humiliation
- Self-consciousness
- Fear of being the centre of attention
- Fear of being judged negatively
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of helplessness

## Blushing and your life

The bad news is that blushing is an unfortunate part of your life right now. It is your cognitive interpretation of your blushing that triggers automatic negative thoughts, which are by definition, irrational. Its feeling worried that you will be judged, or people will think you are awkward for blushing. The good news though is that social anxiety and all its symptoms, including blushing can be overcome!

## Overcoming blushing

*Most often blushing only bothers you, and no one else really takes notice, so adopting a "who cares" attitude and taking the pressure off of yourself is the best solution. If you start to blush during an interaction the best thing you can do is just carry on, the blush will go away on its own. You will realize that it is not a big deal, afterwards, pat yourself on the back for making it through, be kind to yourself.*

*The next thing you can do is start with cognitive therapy for social anxiety, this will help address triggers that are involved with the cycle of blushing. If you think that this is something that might be helpful for overcoming your social anxiety please attend one of ADAM's information sessions for more information.*

## References

- Clark, J. (2008). Why do people blush? HowStuffWorks.com. Retrieved from: <http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/emotions/blush.htm>  
Richards, T. Blushing: A symptom of social anxiety. Social Anxiety Institute. Retrieved from: <https://socialanxietyinstitute.org/blushing-social-anxiety>