

OVERCOMING THE SPOTLIGHT EFFECT

Read the article and pay attention to the phrases in bold.

Have you ever felt like all eyes were on you, scrutinising every move and word? This is known as the spotlight effect, a common psychological phenomenon where we overestimate how much others notice us.

Take Jessica, for example. A talented professional, she often felt **on edge**, convinced that her minor mistakes were glaringly obvious to everyone. After a recent presentation, she was **down in the dumps**, sure that her colleagues were silently judging her.

However, her experience took an unexpected turn. Her boss praised her for her insightful contributions, leaving Jessica **at a loss for words**. Her colleagues, instead of focusing on her perceived flaws, were **blown away by** her ideas. This left her **in high spirits**, realising her fears were largely unfounded.

As she prepared for another presentation, Jessica felt the familiar anxiety, **on tenterhooks about** how she'd be perceived. Yet, the presentation went smoothly, and she was **over the moon with** the positive feedback. She realised that people are often too preoccupied with their own concerns to scrutinise others as closely as they fear.

This understanding was liberating for Jessica. The pressure to be perfectly eased, and she felt like she was **walking on air**, more confident and comfortable in her own skin. Recognising the spotlight effect's trickery brought her **in a state of bliss**, free from constant worry about others' judgements.

Jessica's story is a powerful reminder that we often overestimate how much others notice our flaws. The spotlight effect can leave us **in a funk**, obsessing over perceived flaws that others barely notice. But by recognising this cognitive bias, we can begin to challenge these thoughts and approach situations with greater self-compassion and confidence.



Look at the phrases that express feelings. Write P (Positive), B (Both/Neutral), or N (Negative) in the checkbox. Then, match each phrase to its meaning.

a) phrases to describe happiness (4 examples)

b) phrases to describe worry (2 examples)

c) phrases to describe sadness (2 examples)

d) phrases to describe impression or shock (2 examples)

☐ 1. down in the dumps ____

☐ 2. walking on air ____

☐ 3. in a funk ____

☐ 4. at a loss for words ____

☐ 5. on tenterhooks ____

☐ 6. over the moon ____

☐ 7. in a state of bliss ____

☐ 8. be blown away ____

☐ 9. be on edge ____

☐ 10. in high spirits ____

Complete with one of the expressions

I was _____ when I received a perfect score on my project and realized that my anxiety about being judged was unnecessary.

After the performance ended and the audience's positive reaction became clear, I was _____, overwhelmed with joy and relief.

I was _____ when I discovered that my classmates appreciated my presentation, despite my fears of making a bad impression.

Before my big job interview, I was _____, fearing that every small detail would be scrutinized and judged harshly by the interviewers.

After receiving encouraging feedback from my boss and realizing that my initial worries were exaggerated, I was _____ and felt much more confident.

When I thought everyone was judging my every move during the meeting, I felt _____ and couldn't focus on my tasks.

After giving a flawless presentation and realizing that my colleagues were genuinely impressed, I felt like I was _____ for the rest of the day.

Following a minor mistake I made in my speech, I was _____, convinced that everyone in the audience was fixated on my error.

When my friends reassured me that they hadn't even noticed my nervousness during the event, I was _____, unable to express how relieved I felt.

During my final exam, I was _____, thinking that every pause or glance from the examiner meant I was making a mistake.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	in a state of bliss	at a loss for words	vastly	in high spirits	anxiety	relaxed	public setting	identify
2	judgment	notice	on second thought	self-critical	fear	worried	affect	conscious
3	sense	tendency	showdown	be on edge	unfounded	impressed	visage	walking on air
4	apparel	attention	assume	imperfection	unexpected	wrinkle	influenced	focus
5	insight	down in the dumps	gracing	flaw	silently	self-compassion	nervous	recall
6	paying attention	consume	revelling	tend to	overestimate	confident	problem	familiar
7	obsessing	behaviour	prey	bias	be blown away	pressure	over the moon	harmed
8	concerned	faux pas	susceptible to	assure	convinced	preoccupied	on tenterhooks	in a funk

