

Talking to my 16-year-old self: Branka Kringas

**What did you want to ask me?**

Will I ever grow out of my shyness?

**I am afraid you won't. However, you will learn to live with it if you accept it and stop worrying about it. In familiar places or with people you know you will be less shy or not shy at all.**

I tried to be less shy.

**Did you?**

I did. Last September I was sent by the Poliklink (medical centre for school children in the former Yugoslavia) to Zlatibor (Golden Pine Tree) Mountain resort. I was very skinny and pale, so I had to put on some weight and get some colour in my cheeks.

One Saturday evening my friend, Ana, and I went to dance at the hotel. It is a small place, but very popular. Tourists and health enthusiasts go there from all over Europe.

It wasn't bad when boys asked me to dance. But when a 'ladies choice' was announced I knew I would rather die than ask a boy for a dance. Ana suggested we ask two Austrian men who were in their 40s and dressed in traditional lederhosen.

Ana took my hand and we walked towards them. I wanted to run back, but Ana held tight. When we stood in front of the men my cheeks were burning. I was looking at my shoes. Ana asked if they would like to dance with us. They were delighted.

Boy, could they dance. I love dancing. I relaxed and enjoyed myself till I noticed everybody in the hall was watching us. My cheeks started burning and when I went back to my seat my knees were shaking.

Another time was even worse. It was a very warm morning and I couldn't resist diving into the lake and swimming across. I got in trouble with Poliklink's management. I had an angry lecture from the manager. I was told I was irresponsible and could have caught pneumonia.

I stood in front of manager's desk lost for words with my face crimson. (I finally had colour in my cheeks). I was dismissed. It was a moment I will never forget.

**No, I didn't forget it. Moments like that help you to learn to cope with shyness.**

**They will not stop you having a contented, happy and interesting life.**

**That is the life I'm having and I hope I still will.**