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Living with Anxiety

It's a beautiful day and you're at home doing what you love to do the most. Whether its binge watching your favorite TV show or playing your favorite video game or simply listening to music. No one is home and you feel as if all your worries are gone. Suddenly you get an intense unsettling feeling in your chest, and you start to panic. Why am I feeling this? Why am I worried? Should I be worried? Should I be worried about this thing that happened years ago? Is it because I'm being a bad friend? Do my friends not like me anymore? Or is it because that one time I made my parents upset? Do they not like me anymore? Could it possibly be school? Is it my job? Does my manager think I'm not a good employee? If I lose my job, what would I do? What could it be? Your mind starts to wander everywhere thinking what could possibly be wrong with me. Your mind then brings up millions of questions and scenarios, all leading you to think of the worst outcome. Sometimes, there's really nothing to worry about at all. But when you're living with anxiety your mind takes control and drives you to the worst thoughts possible. This is what I must deal with and many others daily.

So, what exactly is anxiety? What causes people to have this? Is it even a real thing? These are questions that a lot of people with anxiety get asked daily. I've been asked this so many times because to others it seems impossible for your mind to control you in such a harmful way. And trust me I do feel the same way, how is it possible that my mind can take control so powerfully

and cause all this stress not only to my mental but influence my body where sometimes I can't breathe or sometimes, I shake or cry uncontrollably? This is sadly a reality that some people face. Some are more severe than others. The definition of anxiety from the American Psychological Association is "... an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure. People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry. They may also have physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, dizziness or a rapid heartbeat." Anxiety takes a toll on not only adults but on kids and teens as well. Some kids experience it as early as the age of five going on to their teen years and eventually sometimes in their adult years. I feel like for one to get a better view of what living with anxiety is like is to hear personal stories to help put you in their shoes and experience what they do all the time. The Mental Health Foundation has given people the opportunity to share their stories on their website. Katie is a young adult who experiences this disorder and gives you a sense of what a day is like in her life. Katie states, "I would randomly start crying in the taxi on the way to a party or struggle to answer the phone at work because I was terrified. I felt like I was losing my mind – thoughts were racing constantly, and I kept seeing images in my head of death." Katie is implying that these moments come up randomly. She could be on her way to meet her friends, or her family and she'll randomly start crying because of her anxiety. I can't stress this enough but sometimes there really is no real reason to be worried. The crazy thing about anxiety is that it'll make you worry about something when there really is nothing to worry about. Katie goes on to state, "Then one day at work I had my first SEVERE panic attack. Nothing happened, I was just at my desk replying to emails and then suddenly I felt myself losing it. It was like I just couldn't cope anymore with anything. I didn't know I was having a panic attack at the time – all I

remember is feeling like I was going to die.” Katie is trying to convey that this feeling overcame her so intensely to the point where she felt as if she was going to die. Anxiety usually leads in some cases to panic attacks. And as you can see from Katie, she was just trying to do her job and she clearly states that nothing happened, implying that there was no reason to be worried in the first place. But that feeling just happened to come up and had gotten so bad to the point where she couldn't even do her job. Kids as well experience anxiety from a young age when they experience either a major turnaround during their childhood or have constant worries. The American Psychiatric Association also provides a platform for people to express their stories and experiences with this disorder as well. Joey is a 12-year-old boy who has always had this constant fear of losing his parents. It has gone to a point where he had to be referred to a psychologist Ann while being further evaluated it turned out to be that he was diagnosed with Separation anxiety disorder. The story of Joey states, “His most constant fear revolved around his parents’ safety. He often was fine when both were at work or home, but when they were in transit or elsewhere, he was afraid that they would die in an accident.” These are things that a child without anxiety would not ever think about. Joey, however, happens to worry about his parents' well-being in certain places. This story also states, “Joey was mostly concerned about his mother’s safety, and she had gradually reduced her solo activities to a minimum. She said, it felt like ‘he would like to follow me into the toilet.’” Because of his anxiety it leads him to worry so much to the point where he feels as if he needs to be around his mother not only for her safety but for his sanity. If he's away from his mother, he worries about her well-being but if he's around her every second of the day he'll feel okay. Anxiety has this sort of control over you where it makes you do certain things so that it can ease your mind a bit. However sometimes that affects the relationships we have with people around us.

Anxiety can affect the connections we have with people because there are times where we do things that may seem out of the ordinary to others outside of our community and there are times where it might rub them the wrong way to the point where they don't want to be our friend or our partner anymore. We have moments where we will have a mental breakdown from time to time or keep things to ourselves in fear of the others' reaction but to them it seems like we hide stuff and every time we break down it's just a cry for attention. This has led to a lot of head bumps with friends and family and romantic partners and is honestly upsetting to us because all we really need is someone to understand and work with us and love us despite this disorder we have. People who have anxiety don't do these things on purpose. We don't break down and worry and cry just for attention. If anything, we try to hide the fact that we have anxiety just so that we don't drive the people we love away from us. I feel as if people outside of our community should educate themselves a little more when dealing with someone who has anxiety. We don't want space; we don't want time to ourselves sometimes because being alone with our thoughts is the scariest thing in the world. That should just go to show how powerful anxiety is.