

Why Panic Survivor Started

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I guess an appropriate introduction would start with a little about myself, and my Journey so far. Sorry in advance if this turns out to be a long post, I do sometimes ramble :)

Who I am..

I'm Ken, 35 years old, I am a Director of Information Technology for a Home Builder. I'm married (for 15 years) with 2 great children (12 and 9). I'm a former drug addict (clean now for 17 years). I live on a farm (well sort of) it feels more like a zoo :) 2 Horses, 5 cats, 1 dog (until recently 2 dogs :(, 1 hamster, and 3 birds. I really can't think of anything else to tell you about myself so I guess I'll just tell you about my journey with Anxiety and Panic.

My Journey..

My life has been blessed, from early on (a story I'll refrain from telling in this post) I was lucky. I screwed up at 16 (drugs) but got myself back on track with a lot of help. After that things just seemed to go right. I met a wonderful woman (girl at the time), got married and started a gradually growing and successful career. Stress levels in my job(s) were always high but manageable.

Two years ago, I felt like I was spending too much time away from home and family so I made a lifestyle change and dropped a lot of extra-curricular activities to make more time at home. I was volunteering a lot for a variety of charities and my church. I reigned that in and began devoting my time to family.

About 9 - 10 months ago something snapped, I guess it started well before that but I digress.. It was as if I was in a plane crash. I was flying along, perfect weather, clear blue skies, suddenly I was losing control and SPLAT! It started with some worries at work, but it progressed in to a whole lot more. I'll get in to my personal details on my anxiety and panic in another post, but as I am sure it is / was with most of you a very frightening experience.

My first panic attack started one evening at home, tingling in the arms and hands, shortness of breath, hot flash, cold sweat, racing heart, and MY MIND!, it was racing like no tomorrow (euphemism), but I was really sure there was going to be "no tomorrow".. I don't know how I got settled down, but I did. The next morning it started all over again, so I went to the doctor. He didn't "diagnose" me at that point, even though my heart rate was well over 130 and my blood pressure was skyrocketing, but that's beside the point.

I'll skip through some of my journey, but bring you to where I am now... It came to me as a read about all of this, that I was not alone. That people just like me were facing the same fears and feelings. Some people were doing well, others.. not so well. I was reminded of a television show I had seen, it was one of those "news magazine" shows like Dateline or something. Some of you might remember the show but anyway the show was about survivors, people that had been in tragic accidents or situations that left them nearly hopeless. Plane crashes, swept overboard in to the sea, lost in the

wilderness or desert, etc and the show focused on what made survivors different from those that didn't survive. It was attitude! It was also evident that survivors decided early on in their journey that they WOULD survive, and they wouldn't give up. Some of the stories talked about how they made "steps" sometimes small, sometimes for the day, for just the hour and even sometimes for the next 2 minutes. That's when I decided that I WAS GOING TO BE A SURVIVOR! A PANIC SURVIVOR!

I decided that I had to have a plan (goals), and that even if it was just how to make it through the next 60 seconds, I wasn't going to go forward without them. I also decided that if I had a setback (thinking like a traditional survivor.. a bear in my path, or a storm that made the waves bigger and ultimately harder to swim) I would persevere push through and move forward toward my goal, perhaps even reset the goal to something closer and more attainable, but forward moving none the less.

How'd it work you ask? Well I'm still here and I'm still moving forward. :) Have I become a survivor in the past tense of the word? Not yet. I'm still in the wilderness of anxiety, but I'm working on getting out... But I am a survivor of yesterday and all the days that I have put behind me.

I'm a Christian. I am also a firm believer that everything happens for a reason, and that God has a plan for me. It was VERY hard to accept, but I finally accepted that I had this condition because God wanted me to. Try to swallow that! Try and decide for yourself that an "affliction" is something that you should be thankful for! It wasn't easy (Still isn't).

Well if I had this because God wanted me to, then WHY? I prayed, A LOT! looking for the answer. I got It! God had blessed me with a lot of talent. Specifically, he has blessed me with talent related to my career, and even more specifically with web development. He also blessed me with this attitude. The survivor attitude and the knowledge that the survivor attitude was something to be shared. An attitude that would help me, and in the process help others.

So I needed to put that talent to work! So I did! Only days ago I launched <http://www.panicsurvivor.com> Take a look, see what I mean? All this talent that had been wasted (in my opinion) on hundreds of other web sites.. Talent with search engine placement that let me have the number one spot for the search phrase "Janet Jackson's Breast" and "Superbowl Halftime Show" the Monday after the Superbowl on Google. Wasted!

So I launched it

Now I need help, help in spreading this "survival attitude" Are you a survivor? Did you just crash in your plane? or did your plane crash awhile ago? Either way you have found other survivors. We don't have to wander aimlessly in the wilderness of anxiety alone. Join me and become one of the Panic survivors, until you're truly a "Survivor" in the past tense meaning of the word. Do you want to better understand what PanicSurvivor is about? Read this posting from the forums: Why another BBS?

Are you a member of another forum? Am I asking you to leave there? No way! Just add us on in your travels through the web. We need your experiences. Remember that this is a place with a different attitude! The Survival attitude!

It's yours.. The site is all yours.. Want to help others while helping yourself? Have at it. Want to post articles? moderate the forums? add links to the link engine? Just say so and it's yours..

Register yourself as a survivor

UPDATE (January 8th, 2007)

Well it's been a little over 2 1/2 years since I originally wrote my story, and I thought that maybe it was time to update you a little on my journey with Anxiety and Panic. First let me say what an amazing place that this has become! It started out because I wanted to help people but I never imagined how much it would in turn help me too. So many people have offered me support, so many people have shared their stories as well. I started out sharing mine and people just opened up and said "Hey I have a story too!" It has been incredibly inspirational.

Who I am (now)..

Today I'm, 38 years old, I am the Vice President of Operations for the same Home Builder (2 promotions in between). I'm married (for 18 years) with 2 great children (15 and 12). I'm a former drug addict (clean now for 20 years). I live on a farm (well sort of) it feels more like a zoo :) The Horses are gone, 3 cats, and 3 dogs (2 new ones), 1 hamster (not the same one), and the birds became like rabbits and we now have 9, we have uncountable fish now and a HUGE snail called Goliath.

My Journey (since then):

I still "survive" anxiety. It has not gone away, I am not "cured", but I have learned a lot about coping, "surviving" and living with the little monster. Today it is just that... a "little" monster. It doesn't have nearly the control over me that it once did. I haven't dealt with a full Panic Attack since I started the site, but I've been "On the edge" numerous times. Setting goals is still the way that I beat down the little monster. Sometimes I set them for a minute an hour a day or even a week.

I have experienced weeks in a row that were completely ANXIETY FREE!!! (this week isn't one of them though :) but that's OK with me now. I know that it will come and go, I know that for the most part it's just a part of "who I am". That doesn't mean I like it! It doesn't mean that I won't keep trying to beat it permanently either! I guess if I were to self diagnose I would classify what I have today as "Generalised Anxiety Disorder" not that it needs a formal name. I prefer to beat anxiety on my own without medications. However on occasion I DO use medication to stop the little monster in it's tracks. That's typically in a situation where I don't have the time to use relaxation techniques and for whatever reason I can't get it under some semblance of control. If I'm out to dinner with my family I can't simply just go to the car and settle down for a half hour. So if the little monster shows up I might just take a pill. But it's got to get pretty bad.

So how's the web site doing?

In a word... Amazing! December of 2006 set an all time record for visitors with over 1.2 million! Is it helping people? You bet, it doesn't take much reading of the "Survivor Stories", in the forums, or in the blogs to see posts from people that find their home here, their healing here, their inspiration here, and even salvation here.

I made a structure but the people filled it in, they came, they shared and they supported each other. They have helped me, I'll bet that they'll help you too...

Become a Survivor! It's well worth it..

UPDATE January 9th 2009

I can't believe that it's been 2 years since I wrote the last update. It's completely coincidental that I decided to write this update almost EXACTLY 2 years after the last one. I just decided at the spur of the moment that I would write an update and to my surprise I noticed the date of the last one. Wow a lot has changed since then.

Who I am (Now)

I'm 40!! It was a birthday that I struggled with a bit. Being a Panic Survivor I have always had an increased level of mortality. For so many days of my life I believed I would die right then, it's no wonder that even after anxiety was "put in its place" that a milestone like a 40th birthday would cause me to reflect on my life. Of course that came along with the traditional "anxiety thought pattern" of "I was getting older and time was getting shorter". And even though today I don't deal with anxiety at a level anywhere like I did in 2004 (the start of this site) emotionally I still have a heightened belief that time is somehow "shorter" for me than the logical side of me knows is probably a different reality. Nevertheless I still struggled with that Birthday back in November.

I've now been married for 20 years! My kids are 17 and 14, the oldest is a Senior in High School. My youngest is a Freshman, My life is filled with a lot of their activities. My youngest shows signs of "Heightened anxiety" which worries me on a totally different level, but I work with her to overcome those moments. My entire family has known about my condition the entire time. I truly believe that my own self education regarding anxiety and the fact that I shared with them and continually talked with them about what was happening to me and how I was doing has been a major part of my recovery and survival. I owe a lot to them as they have "lived" with this nearly as much as I have. Their support has been unwavering. I thank God everyday for each of them. I couldn't have done this without them.

I got out of the Construction Industry not long after I wrote the last update. One of the reasons I started this site was because I could put my my talent with Search Engine Optimization to use in helping people. I decided that it was time to hang out my own shingle and make SEO a career. I started a firm called Buildtelligence Web Solutions. The firm has EXPLODED in growth. The Lord has truly blessed me. We now employ over 15 people and expect to grow by another 30 more employees over the next 12 months! We have clients all over the world the US, Canada, Europe and Australia. It's a lot different than having 200+ people report to me as I did at the homebuilder, but I truly believe that is more enjoyable. I get to do everyday what used to be a hobby and a passion. Someone once told me that if you do something you love you will never "work" a day in your life. Well I no longer "work" anymore. Like I said.. the Lord has blessed me and my family. I have to believe that it has something to do with this site and giving to others. Buildtelligence also gives. 10% of our production is dedicated to producing and promoting non profit sites for free. I consider it tithing to our communtiy. The Internet has given a lot to me. It's only fair that I give it back!

I still live on the "farm" the hamster is gone. Goliath the snail was found floating one day, but we still have a lot of fish, birds, 3 dogs and 2 cats.Â

My Journey Continued

I am nearly completely anxiety free!Â That's not exactly true.Â I still feel anxiety.Â What I have learned however is that anxiety is a perfectly normal emotion.Â The difference today is that when I feel anxiety it no longer consumes me the way in which it once did.Â I still on rare occasions have what I might refer to as "near" panic attacks.Â But I shut them down quickly and then don't tend to focus on them relentlessly as I once did.Â I have learned through this site that Anxiety won't kill me.Â I once believed that I was going to die at any moment, I also thought that during a panic attack I might die.Â One day I decided to let a panic attack kill me.Â In the middle of an attack I decided to see if I could make it worse.Â I couldn't and "it" couldn't kill me either.Â Panic Attacks seemed to lose their power over me after that.Â I know others that have tried this approach and it didn't work for them.Â I don't claim to have the cure for anxiety because I don't. Â I can only tell you the reader of this long diatribe that you have a cure for "you" out there and to take on the survival attitude means that you set yourself on a course to find your personal cure.Â You can do it.Â There is hope.Â At one point in my life I decided to believe that. It made all the difference in the world.

Am I ready to call myself a survivor in the past tense of the word?Â NO.Â Have I "survived" this "permanently"? NO.Â Am I "cured"? NO.Â I truly believe now that Surviving Panic and anxiety is much like that of a recovering alcoholic.Â Once an Alcoholic always an Alcoholic.Â I know I now have my anxiety under control, but I am constantly vigilant that I must have better and more positive thought patterns.Â I must always "put" anxiety in it's place.Â It's a conscious effort and one that I sometimes still struggle with today.Â Nobody understands anxiety like we do.Â Â Unless you have lived it you just have no clue.Â Those that have never experienced a full fledged panic attack don't understand.Â I will always need you the fellow survivor because it's only you that knows what I know, knows what it's like, and it's only my fellow survivors that I can really talk to about it with.Â So I will, I think always be a survivor in the present tense of the word.Â Each day is a blessing and the people here are a blessing too!

So how's the website doing?

Amazing!Â We redesigned it and launched it on a new platform a little over a year ago.Â It was a painful process, at the time we couldn't bring all of our old forum postings over to the new platform and there was a lot of good stuff there.Â But since then the forums have been FILLED with even more stuff.Â They are a fountain of information and encouragement to everyone that reads them.

Our visitor counts are still running strong and we are still breaking records.Â It's sad but I think that anxiety in general has climbed in recent months because of the economy and exceptionally high unemployment rate.Â This influx of new survivors will need your help too.Â If you're reading this you might even be a new survivor.Â This site won't help you but the people here will!Â The site is still nothing but a few digital bits floating across your screen at the moment, but this place is a community... a group of thousands of people that are trying each and every day to get better.... To improve and win their battle with Anxiety, what's amazing to me is that they are getting better little by little everyday.Â

You must become a survivor.Â You must let the philosophy of "I will survive this" become your mantra.Â You will succeed.

Join us and I promise that the people here will change your life! They will improve you in more ways than you can ever imagine. Congratulations your journey as a survivor begins today.

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