

Derealization

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When people look at me today, they would never guess that not too long ago I quietly suffered from anxiety that impacted everything I did. On the outside, I suppose I looked normal. Perhaps someone who got stressed out rather easily or a little too intense sometimes. Inside, however, I was perpetually tense and on edge.

To be honest, I don't like the term "Survivor." It gives off the impression that people with anxiety (and/or it's various spin-offs) are up against a monster and it will take a monumental effort to break free. This is not the truth.

While I would be lying if I said the journey to a life with non-troublesome levels of anxiety is easy, it is not nearly as hard as you may have come to believe. There will be tough times and you may well face self-doubt. That's okay. Go easy on yourself and trust that you're making progress every day. Because guess what, no matter what you're facing and how desperate it may seem, you've hung in there this far. You're still alive, almost none of your worries have come true and whether you realize it or not, you're making progress to the life you want to live by learning lessons consciously or unconsciously. Once your anxiety levels drop, you will be so grateful for everything you faced.

Please read my story and if you have any questions/need advice/feel helpless etc, please feel free to email me. I suffered from GAD, panic attacks, derealization and depersonalization. My concepts apply across the board with anxiety though.

My story is long and I may not have gone into the required level of detail. However, if you email me, I can try and help you with your specific problems by going into the finer aspects.

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So now, the question is how do you get to that desired way of life. Let's start with my story:

I'm 22. When I was 19 and a sophomore in college, it began to occur to me that something was off. Like many college kids, I sometimes smoked weed as a freshman. One night, I got way too high and had a terrible trip. I faced sheer terror that night and it's impact on me was lasting. In hindsight, I suppose I've always been a little neurotic and this probably served as a trigger that set me over the edge. I subconsciously suppressed the underlying anxiety for a long time but once in a while I faced a wave that was absolutely frightening. When this happened, I quickly pushed out of my head what I was feeling and did my best to move on with life as normal.

The signs were always there though. I often had trouble sleeping, irrational thoughts, constant worries and I was ridiculously tense. Worst of all, it felt like there was a veil of some sort separating me from the rest of my environment. One night, I finally reached the end of the rope. Out of nowhere, I felt like I was floating, detached and had no idea where I was. One of my majors was psychology and I finally had to face what I had been trying to avoid so desperately: I was going through depersonalization and derealization.Â

Â I spent the night this occurred researching the two. Thankfully, I came across 'The Linden Method.' He is an individual who used to suffer from anxiety that once left him struggling terrible and also made his way out of it. I was desperate, scared and felt incredibly alone. I needed something, anything to get me out. This was all I had and I went for it. It is of the best decisions I have ever made and I highly recommend you invest in it. If you can't because of the price, that's okay. Use youtube as a resource for relaxations, try meditation and find great books/websites on buddhist principles. A little bit of effort can go a very long way.Â

After that night, the floodgates had opened and my anxiety took hold. It was in my mind and in my body. Thoughts of it consumed me. The Linden Method got me through each day. It made me realize that the derealization and depersonalization were nothing but manifestations of my increased anxiety levels. I started to do his guided meditations and relaxations. They helped tremendously. But that was just one step of the way. I had to truly understand that anxiety is NOT A DISEASE. PLEASE DO NOT LABEL YOURSELF. I have had GAD and I have had panic attacks. They are NOT DISORDERS. They are just a natural response to perceived external threats. While it may provide some immediate gratification to be able to label yourself as someone with a disorder, what you're essentially doing is locking yourself into a mindset. You make the problem bigger than it really is.Â

This is not to undermine your situation. I fully understand the desperation you feel. I fully understand the loneliness it may cause among many other things. But I promise you, this is not the be all and end all. I often felt like breaking down. I often felt helpless. We are only human and this is normal. Please remember that you are SIMPLY FACING THE RESULTS OF HEIGHTENED LEVELS OF ANXIETY.Â

Â In the beginning, I understood this intellectually. But slowly yet steadily, my anxiety began to fade away. I learned that derealization is caused by the adrenaline pumping through your body as a result of being worried so much. Your body is constantly prepping itself for fight or flight.

As you become more relaxed and realize that you are more than adequate in dealing with the world and as a person, you find that what you faced was nothing but a fear. A fear that there is always something threatening your existence or life situation. What makes this so difficult is that your natural response is to try and control your environment. Unfortunately, this is impossible. We all unconsciously resist what we are worried about and often try to ignore it. These emotions just end up building up and magnifying themselves until we face them. It is scary and often frightening. The good news is that the pain is far, far worse when you run away from it. Once you face it head on and feel the emotions fully, they go away, often for good. The prospect of the pain is always far worse than the real thing. I swear to you that this is the truth.Â

Too make a long story short, Today I have made my way out of heightened levels of anxiety and moved away from DR and DP.Â

The Linden Method was unbelievable. Once again I cannot emphasize enough how valuable it is for anyone with anxiety.
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1. I learned that panic attacks are caused simply by your fear of the strong symptoms and of losing control. Think back, has a panic attack ever truly hurt you? You simply get overwhelmed by the force of anxiety. Once I realized that a PA is a vicious cycle where anxiety from an initial concern causes a strong emotional reaction that in turn, causes more anxiety, I never faced another one till this day.

2. I realized I was always looking for symptoms and often took very ambiguous information and misinterpreted it to become congruent with my fears.

Once I convinced myself that I was schizophrenic! This was and is absolutely not true yet it seemed like such a valid concern at the time. The next point talks about how I pulled myself out of such chains of thought:

3. Guided relaxations and meditations. These are so, so powerful and helpful. They can serve to flip your day on it's head. They calm you down and have a lasting impact on your day. Doing these helped me realize just how irrational my fear based thoughts could get.Â

4. Exercise/yoga. Just do it! The effects are incredible. Sometimes it's hard to drag yourself to work out. Fair enough. We all face this, anxious or not. However, the feeling after a good workout is amazing. Start slow, there's no rush. Once you exercise a few times, you'll understand it's worth.Â

5. Use your resources. Reach out to people who are willing to help. (I am such a person).

6. Do your best to stop taking life so seriously! Everything isn't life or death! You know this intuitively and deep down of course. Just a matter of seeing the sky from behind the clouds.Â

7. Acknowledge that almost none of your concerns have come true. Stop trying to control everything. This is hard at first but be brave (you are brave simply for being here and looking for change).

8. Very important: Face your fears, preferably as they arise. Easier said than done, I know. But there is no quick fix here. There is a journey to be made and it's not nearly as bad as you imagine it to be. Â

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Â Where I am today:

1. I live, laugh and love. I am not perfect, I still worry and I still get neurotic sometimes. But this is normal! Everyone faces self-doubt, everyone faces struggles and everyone worries. I have not faced DR or DP in years. If I get too worried I calm myself down and that's that. Funnily enough, most people now think I have a relaxed vibe.Â

2. I acknowledge my feelings and deal with them. I try not to run away from them as best as I can. Cut yourself slack wherever you can.Â

3. I'm working on living my dreams one step at a time. I haven't achieved everything I want to in life but that's okay! Life is fun and often challenging. Â I'm content simply because I can be! I have my ups and downs of course. It's what makes us human.Â

4. I still meditate using something called 'Headspace.' There is an app for your smartphone and a website (www.getsomeheadspace.com). Life-changing.Â Â

Â I realize that this was a long story and perhaps somewhat disjointed. I am not a professional writer but I do genuinely want to help in some way. I am 100% convinced that I can be of some benefit to you. Please email me if you need it. There will be no judgements on my part. You are all worthy and complete to me!Â

Once again, akbariqbal91@gmail.comÂ

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