Life With Panic Attacks

by EMILY JASON

3 Ways My Panic Attacks Changed My Life for the Better

Unlike most people, I actually don't remember my first panic attack. I vaguely remember the period of my life when it all started but not the very first attack of my anxiety. This is maybe due to the fact that for long period of time, I didn't pay attention to my condition which of course worsened it. It might've also been that I just secretly hoped that everything is okay with me and that the symptoms would disappear. The cold truth is that they don't magically disappear and it certainly requires you to pay attention and simply do something.

Do You Remember your Worst Panic Attack?

I surely do remember mine! Maybe it was so rough because it happened at my home. Until then, I've had panic attacks only outside or when travelling by public transportation or taxi. But never had one of those at my home – I started to think of my home as a fortress. Nothing could happen to me when I'm home surrounded with my things! And that's the reason maybe my first panic attack at my home was one of the worst. I was shaking for more than 20 minutes. I felt like my heart was in my throat and as though I would certainly faint any second. I tried to lay down - couldn't do that. I tried to drink liquids – not any sign of effect. I felt like these were the last seconds of my life and I couldn't do anything about it. The nightmare was completed by the fact that I was alone at home and yes, I certainly thought that I will just die at my apartment and my neighbors will find me after 3 days. How I survived? I was thinking to call an ambulance and after a while I called my brother to come and he went to the emergency with me. Of course by the time I was there, the attack was over. And as it usually happens, the doctors said that I'm in perfect health and there's nothing wrong with me.

Do you Remember your Last Panic Attack?

My last one was actually a week ago. The funny thing is that it happened again at my home right before I fell asleep. And here come the differences. Just before I fell asleep I felt a little strange. Little by little as I was laying down in my bed I started to breathe heavily, till came the moment when I almost couldn't breathe (or at least that was my first thought). How did I react? This time I tried to calm down and started breathing deeper and deeper. I completely focused on my breathing. In and out and in again. I tried to take deep breaths in and out and count to five with each. It was only about a minute or two and I started feeling better. I didn't even recognize when I felt asleep. I woke up the other morning and actually wondering if this was a real panic attack or just my imagination. The truth is that this was an actual panic attack. The only difference was that now I decided to take my fears in my hands and accept what was happening.

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Making Necessary Changes

Panic attacks taught me many things but the most important was that they changed my life. And I should admit

that the change was for good. Here are the 3 major things that I changed because of the panic attacks that actually helped my overall health and well being:

My eating habits

I'm one of those people with a crazy metabolism that allows me to eat anything without gaining weight. And that's what I did all my life. Until the panic attacks happened. I realized that I have to pay attention to me – and that meant not only my emotions but also my body and health. For years I was actually against healthy eating and never understood how so many people can be so fond of it. But when you are emotionally unstable and you are shaking from the smallest things around you, you kind of learn that you need energy. I realized that my body needs energy and the food that I put in it doesn't support me enough. I started to have 5 meals a day. But my greatest accomplishment was that I started to have breakfast. I never did before; I preferred to have a cup of coffee instead of eating something. Now it has been a year and I have never missed a breakfast.

I created a sleep regime

In my 20s I enjoyed my evenings and did almost all important things through the night. I just get distracted through the day and the night was my favorite time. But no more. Just like eating healthy food, I started to create stable sleeping habits. And this is really simple but effective. I try to go to sleep at a reasonable hour every night and ensure at least 7-8 hours of night sleep. I always ventilate the room right before going to sleep just to be sure that I have enough fresh air. I started to drink herbal teas at night. I discovered that many herbs help anxiety — chamomile, thyme and common balm have great influence and actually help me to sleep well.

Meditation and relaxation

Through the whole process of dealing with my anxiety and panic attacks I've tried many things and of course meditation. It happened that this actually helped a lot. And you don't have to be some kind of guru or throw yourself in some new religion or anything. For me meditation is a simple process when you are leaving 20-30 minutes just for yourself. I learned how to do that – not every day but every now and then. Whenever I feel the inner feeling that I have to be alone, I find a quiet place sit down and try to release all the thoughts and tensions that I've gathered through the day or the last weeks. I have tried meditation with guidance, but for me personally, this didn't work. I simply sit down at the floor in the most comfortable position, my back straight and my eyes closed. The next thing is to try to release all the thoughts and it's certainly not easy but not impossible too. I try to focus on my breathing and slowly leave the thoughts to drift away and imagine myself in a quiet, peaceful place. Doing this on a regular basis provided me with the relaxation that I needed.

Conclusion

These were the 3 things my panic attacks changed in my life. As all of these things are actually improvements and help you live a healthier life. You might say that the panic attacks and disorder are actually a positive thing that can happen to you. The hard part is to accept that this is happening to you and try to pay more attention to you. Trust me, 5 years ago I would laugh at anyone who tells me that I will be eating healthy food, doing meditation and having any kind of regime. And maybe that is why I had all this happening around me – to learn that you have to try to be balanced.