

ANGSTY

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MONIQUE I can't remember ever not feeling anxious or sad. It's always been my reality. It started when I was a kid... I broke my arm at Aus-Kick. It was a bad break, and I was in hospital for a few days... After that everything changed, my arm healed by it was like I broke my nerve. I became really jumpy, anxious about even the littlest things. Everything scared me. I did not want to leave my mum's side and I certainly did not want to go back to school... Just the thought of it made me feel sick to the stomach.

Mum would try to make me to go, and it would just turn into a huge fight. I would start crying, I'd struggle to breathe, my chest would feel tighter and tighter, and I would slip into a full-blown panic attack hyperventilating, throwing up, sobbing... Mum would end up in tears right alongside of me. She could see how much I was hurting and there was nothing... nothing she could do to help me. I remember her just holding me, telling me "It's all going to be ok, it's all going to be ok" over and over again until I'd calm down and she'd send me back to bed where I felt safe. This happened every single day and I ended up missing months of school. It caused lots of fights in our family... Dad didn't understand and thought Mum was pandering to me. I could hear him yelling at her at night. "This is ridiculous! What are we paying school fees for? Just make her go."

It took a while, but I finally went back. Gradually at first, half days once a week then more and more. I didn't want to. But I had to... I wanted to be normal so badly. That didn't stop my panic attacks though. I stress about the stupidest of things... A teacher telling me off, a boy saying a smart comment, the thought of going on camp, of walking through a crowd. My friends don't understand, they tell me to calm down and to stop worrying. It's easy enough for them to say but they just don't get it. Some people think it's all crap... My maths teacher actually called me an attention seeker. And I'm not. I'm really not. It's real, and I try... I really do, but people just don't understand how hard it is... They make stupid throw away comments like "oh I'm so anxious or depressed" and don't think how that affects someone like me who really feels like this, all the time.

I know the symptoms now...sweaty hands, nausea, struggling to breath, tight chest, freezing, not being able to move. I have learnt some techniques to manage my anxiety. Breathing exercises, finding a place or a person who I know I can trust... But every day is still a battle. I have horrible negative thoughts that scare me, but I hope that one day...One day soon, I can start feeling normal... But what is normal anyway?