

Allison's Story



At 3 AM on a July 2012 morning, I lay helpless on an emergency room cot, unable to experience any emotion other than fear and the physical sensations that racked my body. My extreme levels of anxiety did not cease; my body showed me no mercy, perhaps because my racing mind did not extend that courtesy to my body. I was wrapped in a backless hospital gown and meagerly strewn blanket that had been nuked in a microwave to keep me warm. I was uncontrollably shaking and shivering from the inside out. I felt aches and pains and my eyes bulged with fright and confusion. "What is happening to me?" I thought.

As a chronic baseline anxiety sufferer my entire life, I was in the throes of the worst and most extended

episode of acute anxiety I'd ever known. I was experiencing five or six full blown panic

attacks per day, generalized anxiety, agoraphobia and unbearable physical sensations. I feared I was dying, or worse, losing my mind and "going crazy," a common fear among those with anxiety and panic disorder.

It all started when I was seven or eight years old (the age my son is now) and I began to experience intense feelings of worry connected to my physical health. As I reached my pre-teen years my anxiety grew more ambitious and branched out to what we now commonly refer to as OCD. But at twelve years old it just kind of felt like this:

"Lock the door and check it three times or something bad might happen."

"Touch the wall as you walk by if you want to stay safe."

You might recognize the above as obsessive-compulsive thoughts and behaviors or "magical thinking," and you may have even experienced something resembling it.

Turning a Challenge into a Gift

By the time I was a teenager I had graduated to the trifecta: anxiety/panic, OCD and depression. It was also around this time that I discovered my well of creativity, intuition and compassion ran deep. The spoken and written word became my solace, and the gift I felt I had to offer the world. My highly sensitized being may have created anxiety, but it also blossomed into an ability to connect with others in a rarefied way, and to express myself as a successful journalist and writer.

I recently published my first memoir, *Journaling Fame: A memoir of a life unhinged and on the record*, illustrating in intimate detail how my anxiety forced me into a space of courage and perseverance, lent itself to a thriving writing career, made me a more astute parent and inspired me to share my story with others. Since my book's release I have been in contact with amazing resources and organizations like the ADAA to lend my support and to gain more knowledge about this disorder.

After years of asking, "Why me?" I never again have to ask that question. Through sharing my story in the media, and through speaking engagements, I have turned it around from challenge to gift.