

## Living with an anxious heart

For those of you with anxiety, maybe you will find comfort in this. and for those of you who don't maybe you will find some understanding and clarity on the matter.

I'd like to start by sharing a little of my story. I was diagnosed with anxiety, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder at a very young age, 14 to be exact. Entering the world of high school was tough for me. Actually, all of high school was tough for me. Along with trying to maintain good grades I participated in multiple clubs and extracurricular activities, including two sports both competitively and for my high school team, I even tried juggling a part time job. My to-do-lists seemed never ending and sleep at night became difficult for me to find. I felt like I was either going 100 miles per hour, or sometimes I would feel so defeated by the amount of unnecessary pressure I put on myself where I would give up all together and fall into a depression for weeks at a time.

When college came around I was slapped in the face with a piece of reality. College is going to be harder to manage than high school was. Keeping a job became more important because things are more expensive when you aren't under your parent's roof. Classes became more difficult and my homework load had tripled. The stress of deciding what I wanted to do with my life was constantly weighing me down. I remember being told by a professor I needed to delete all high school activities from my resume because now I am an adult, and adults don't put high school activities on their resume. I panicked when I looked down at my computer screen and saw that my resume was nearly blank. And me, an adult? Add that to the list of things I need to worry about. I can't be an adult. After this I signed up for multiple clubs and committees on top of the sorority I had already joined. I began to fill my schedule with more things than one person could possibly fit into a day.

If you have anxiety you can probably relate to the constant worry, even when it comes to things you know you can not control. I'm sure you can also relate to the overthinking about well... just about anything and everything. And the physical heaviness on your chest when you're having a panic attack. Or how irritating it is to be told to "calm down" or "let it go" as if it is that simple.

As I have grown older, I have become extremely good at certain techniques to tackle my anxiety head on. Little things go a long way such as taking my medicine consistently, walking up earlier to I don't feel rushed in the morning, going to bed earlier so I am well rested, finishing one thing before I started another, you know the little tips your therapist gives you, or the ones you found from an online blog. For a long time in my head, I could heal myself, if I tried hard enough I could conquer the big scary monster that was inside my head. I have learned that this is impossible. My anxiety is a part of me, a part of me that will never just disappear forever. But that doesn't mean I have to let it define me. I am the one in control of my happiness, I am the one who wakes up in the morning and decides if I am going to have a good day or not, not my anxiety.

Now I am not sitting here writing this article to claim I have it all figured out because believe me, I don't. With my good days come the bad. With my strong days come the weak. I am writing this article to let you know that you are not alone. You are not crazy. You are not ridiculous, and it IS okay that your mind works differently than others. Stop trying to fix yourself and start working on accepting yourself. Most importantly remember: you have enough, you do enough and you are enough.