

The Thing about Having Anxiety

To feel nervous about everything is the worst.

It's like I have a super ability to detect all bad things that probably won't even happen – dumbest super power ever! I'll hear a small noise or notice someone's facial expression change momentarily, and subsequently internalize that detail and all of its imaginary, awful implications for hours. I have the innate gift of over-thinking and overanalysing a single word or sentence, which is why I proofread my emails like ten times before sending them – and if you think it stops there – it doesn't – it's incredibly painful to catch typos hours later as I go through my inbox. I overanalyse every situation, because I'm terrified if I'm not prepared for it.

Essentially, to have a nervous condition is to always gravitate toward the worst-case scenario – it's just how nervous people are born to roll. When my body is being slightly weird – a weird rash, a toothache that isn't going away, or spotting in between periods – I think that obviously it's a clear sign of cancer – and instead of calming down, I consult Google, which always ends up being the worst mistake of my life.

Going to the doctor is always fun for me, because even if there's nothing wrong, I'll be sure to find something. Getting a haircut is nerve-racking too, things can go so absolutely wrong – this is my hair we're talking about, my livelihood, my everything.

Not being sure if I locked the door at night when I'm pretty sure I did is the worst – unless I didn't – and if I didn't – a psychopath could totally shimmy into my house, stab me five times, and then steal my identity, and my dog too. Even if I check roughly five times, I'm never really sure of it. If there is any sort of noise in my house, I become easily convinced that I'm about to be murdered. Unknown callers are probably stalkers who want to kill me. It's got so bad that when my parents are calling me at 11pm, I automatically think, 'oh god, oh god, someone must be dead!'

The made-up scenarios in my head can be so time-consuming; I stress about things for absolutely no logical reason. Do you know what it's like to be afraid of your own mind? For me, it's like a silent battle. Every little fear of worry becomes ten thousand times worse. Did I leave the stove on? What if my house burns down? I won't possibly be able to make tea without a house. What if I'm late? Or get lost on the way? What if there's an accident? I've got ninety-nine problems, and I am all of them.

When people ask me why I'm worrying, I want to say, 'Because, Alvin, why shouldn't I worry when a million things can go wrong?' But I don't – because non-nervous, chill people don't get me. I hate it, too, when people ask if I'm okay right in the middle of an anxiety attack – like sure, I'm fine – don't mind me – I'm just here trying to catch my breath – of, course I'm not okay!

And oh my gosh – don't ever tell me to chill – I might just punch you in the face – but I'd honestly think ten times about doing it since violence gives me anxiety. People always try to make me feel better – but their concern only makes it much worse – and then sometimes when I tell people about my anxiety, I feel as if I am not taken seriously. I am worried I'll be laughed at and be accused of making it up in my head. Living with such a disease, I often feel like I'm being followed by a voice; it knows everything about you, all your fears and insecurities, and it will be sure to use it against you.

However, on the flip side you'd be very thankful to have me in your tribe. Why? Because I'll always have your back, your front, and for the things you don't see coming. I'm so very sensitive to the world around me – it's a part of having a heightened threat sensor – and that sensitivity also extends to everyone who is near. My strength is probably overwhelming – since I've experienced more pain than most people will in their lifetime. You will never understand the amount of back-bone it takes to face the world living every day with anxiety.

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