

Anxiety and Panic Attacks

Trusting God When You're Afraid

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Ryan had to figure out how to keep his boss, George, happy. George seemed to avoid him, and when Ryan did see him, George seemed irritated by everything he did. George was always asking why projects hadn't been done earlier, and then he piled on more work. With only two months until Christmas, Ryan couldn't afford to lose his job. He thought, *How will Cheryl and I be able to afford Christmas presents? Without my job we would certainly lose our house. How would Cheryl and the kids handle that? Would my marriage even survive?*

Ryan couldn't let all that happen—he had to keep this job. He frantically reviewed all of his work—rereading every email his boss had sent him during the past month. He spent the rest of the day trying to work—and worrying about everything that could be wrong. *What if my boss isn't happy with the reports I prepared for the big meeting last week? What if I made a calculation error? What if I end up costing the company thousands of dollars because of my mistake? What if that mistake gets me fired?*

When he got home at the end of the day, he was exhausted. His head was killing him; his muscles were tight; and he could barely focus at supper with his family. Cheryl asked him what was wrong, but all he said was that he'd had a hard day at work. His mind was spinning with anxiety, and he wondered how much more stress he could take. Trying to keep his impossible-to-please boss happy was pushing him to the edge.

* * *

Mia swallowed the lump in her throat and braced herself. She knew what was coming next. She had learned how to handle these episodes at home alone, but now she was in the middle of the grocery store. Her heart was beginning to race, and she was having difficulty breathing. Her mind was racing too, plus her vision was getting blurry. She tried to push her cart quickly to the checkout and get out of the store before things got worse. But the longer she walked, the more she felt like the world was closing in on her. She was so afraid, and she didn't even know why. She felt light-headed. Her heart was pounding, and her fingers and toes were starting to tingle. She wondered if she was dying, or getting ready to have a heart attack, or going insane.

She knew she wasn't going to make it through the checkout, so she ran to the back of the grocery store as quickly as she could. She could barely breathe now. She was seeing stars. She could not feel her hands or feet, and she knew that in about three seconds she was going to start throwing up. She made it to the bathroom just in time. Afterward she sat on the floor, laid her head on her arms, and cried. She wondered, *What is wrong with me? Why am I such a mess? What am I so worked up about?* She sat there crying for fifteen minutes, then slowly got up, left her cart, dragged herself to her car, and drove home. Once home she crawled into bed and slept for three hours. She could not keep living this way. But how could she control her feelings of panic?