**Setbacks Happen On The Road To Recovery**

Have you ever wondered why people often experience setbacks when they begin to tackle their anxiety? Setbacks happen because, as you face your anxiety and the situations that make you feel uncomfortable, the avoidant/protective side of your personality becomes active.

When you decide to tackle your anxiety issue head on, the protective side of your personality would rather that you left well enough alone. Your protective side doesn’t like taking risks and feels better when you don’t put yourself in situations that make you feel anxious.

It’s the part of you that says:

“Let’s stay in our comfort zone today. At least we’re safe here.”

This part of your personality has your interests at heart, but you know deep down that a life cocooned from all adversity doesn’t lead to happiness. When you begin on your healing journey, it’s all new and it can feel like you’re moving into unknown territory. You quickly master areas of your life that were causing you problems.

Your protective side takes a back seat and watches with suspicion as you make this progress. Then, after a while, your protective side becomes more active for fear that, with all this progress, a great fall must be just around the corner.

As you move upward and onward, your protective side gets scared and tries to put on the brakes. This creates a conflict and fuels feelings of anxiety. The feelings can be very intense and might be similar to what you’ve experienced before-such as panic and general unease-or there may be new sensations never experienced before.

You might have been doing really well for a week, but then your protective side pops its head up and says something like this:

“Okay, well done. We’re not worried about dizzy spells anymore -fine. But what’s that ringing in your ear?”

“That sounds like trouble to me . . . LET’S GET WORRIED.

“No panic attacks in a week-great. But don’t be fooled. That means a really BIG one is about to pounce!”

These thoughts undermine your confidence. Suddenly you’re feeling vulnerable again, and the anxiety can return as your confidence dips and you obsess again about the way you feel. This kind of response is natural in recovery, and if you’ve experienced a setback recently, I want to show you how to best deal with it.

The first thing to remember is that setbacks happen. Try to never let a setback convince you that you’re not making progress. It doesn’t mean that all your progress has been undone. In general, setbacks are inevitable, and you need to have an accepting attitude toward them.

Secondly, setbacks form part of your healing. To move beyond the anxiety, you need to work with the protective side of your personality and teach it that there really is nothing to fear. When setbacks occur, it’s an indication that you now need to take your new understanding and work with your protective side, which is resisting the change.

You might want to think of that protective side as a small child who doesn’t want you (the parent) to take risks or do anything out of your comfort zone. Talk to this part yourself. Reassure it that all will be well and that it’s necessary for you to work through the anxiety in order to experience more freedom and happiness.

Setbacks can feel like a big step backward, but they’re generally followed by rapid progress on many levels if you engage fully with this protective side of yourself.

There’s an opportunity here for you to create a new working relationship with your protective self, and this will really seal your recovery. When you educate your protective self that you’re really safe and encourage it to take the steps with you, you become fully empowered to end your anxiety problem. All of your internal energies go in the same direction, and there’s no conflict.

Persistence will carry you through all setbacks and ensure your success.

Keep your confidence intact. Build it on the past, on each time you’ve succeeded.

Play those previous successes like a film in your head, again and again, each night as you go to sleep. All the panic attacks you’ve dealt with, all the sensations of anxiety you’ve felt and yet you still got on with it.

General anxiety disorder and, especially, panic attacks are probably the most frightening experiences a person can go through. In most cases, you feel like you’ve had a brush with death itself. That’s no small feat to deal with while on your lunch break!

Be proud of your experiences. You’re not a cowardly victim, but a survivor of a terrifying experience-and what’s more, you probably stayed at work or collected the kids from school. You continued living. Sure, there may be a few hairy anxiety memories in the past that you’d prefer to forget, but the underlying emotion to build upon is that you survived and you’re here now, alive and living a new day.

Build a wealth of memories, and they’ll be your resource from which to draw strength. Write them down, because that solidifies them and makes them more real in your mind. Read them to yourself regularly.

Be sure to keep a diary as written proof of the progress you’re making-the trips you take that weren’t possible before, the special days when you completely forgot you ever had an anxiety problem. You need to keep a record of these achievements because it’s easy for your protective side to negate the great strides you’ve made.

Confidence, just like fear, is contagious. Soon you’ll find it spreading to all areas of your life, giving you a quality of life even beyond your pre-anxiety days.

Always try to focus on the success you’ve achieved, and it will grow and expand in your life.

Persist with it. Turn a setback into an opportunity to solidify your real confidence. Regardless of what happens, you can handle it. Regardless of how your body feels, you’ll move through the anxiety and come out the other side smiling.

If you remain persistent, setbacks can be quickly turned to your advantage, and you’ll be strengthened by the experience.

Setbacks are delicate periods to move through, so you also need to be kind to yourself. Understand that they’re the result of YOU just trying to protect YOU. Be your own best friend. When you take your protective self by the hand and teach it that there’s nothing to fear, you’ll quickly march toward a greater experience of freedom.

Recovery is not a straight linear process. It will help if you try not to measure success on a day-to-day basis. Some days will be better than others-that’s just the way it is, so don’t get upset if you complete something successfully one day but fail the next.

Keep your eyes on the end goal, and persistence will carry you there.

What If My Anxiety Comes Back?

After a person has successfully moved out of their anxiety it is only natural, to at some stage, fear its reoccurrence. I call this the anxiety shadow. It is a worry in the back of your mind that the anxiety could return with full force and disrupt your life all over again.

Anxiety leaves such a strong imprint on people’s lives that it is normal to have such concerns. Fearing a return of anxiety is common when your life becomes stressful again and you worry that the extra stress will tip you back into a state of general anxiety. If you find yourself worrying in such a manner have faith that all will be well.

This worry is just a shadow of what has gone, it is based on the past not the future. Generally the anxiety shadow passes quickly after a day or two and you forget about it again. Remind yourself of the new tools and education you have. Take solace in the fact that your new understanding will lift the anxiety quickly again were it to return.

To your success…

Barry McDonagh

P.S. If you have experienced an anxiety setback and want to get over it quickly, get the support and information you need in my course Panic Away. Stage 3 of the course deals specifically with overcoming setbacks.

Visit: [www.panicaway.com](http://www.panicaway.com/)

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