Anxiety Makes It Hard to Learn

Tania Guadalupe García Ruiz

Image in the public domain from: https://itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/understanding-anxiety-d0d8c4

BEFORE YOU READ: Note that feeling *anxious* (adjective) is different from having *anxiety* (noun). *Anxiousness* (noun) is usually a temporary state. For example, you feel *anxious* before you take a test. *Anxiety* is a deeper and longer-term and more intense experience. Have you ever felt *anxious* or had *anxiety*? If you have, describe it.

Anxiety Is a Real Problem

Sometimes society does not see *anxiety* as a real problem, but in my opinion, it is. Since I was a child, I have been very shy and introverted. It looked like I just wanted to be alone. But, in fact, I had *anxiety*. Having *anxiety* has made it hard for me to be a student. But I have been learning how to manage it.

Shy Child

Normally, kids are very active, but in my case, I never moved from my seat. I was a very quiet girl. When the teacher did "roll call," it was hard for me to say, "Here." My classmates did not see me as a "normal" child, so they often did not include me. This made it harder for me to try to talk to them. I developed the habit of not socializing.

WORLD EDUCATION

Meeting Other Kids Like Me

In middle school, everything was different. There were more classmates. On the first day of school, I felt very alone. But then, I found classmates like me. They started to talk with me. Some of them were shy like me and had social *anxiety*. Others were extroverts. It helped me a lot to be around different kinds of kids.

In middle school, we needed to do group projects. It was good to work as a team because I began to feel that I was not alone. I felt supported and confident. However, when it was time to share our presentation with the class, I got very nervous.

Pounding Heart and Sweating Hands

I remember one presentation where I felt so much *anxiety* that I wanted to cry. I don't know what happened because I was very prepared. I had studied hard, and I knew what to do. But it didn't matter. As my team waited for our turn to present, I got more and more upset. I couldn't remember what I was supposed to say. My heart was pounding, my hands were sweating, and my ears were not working. I couldn't hear anything except a roaring noise in my head.

When it was my turn, I couldn't remember anything, and I wanted to cry. So, I needed to ask the teacher to postpone my presentation. The teacher looked at me and tried to talk to me. She said it was fine. At the end of the class, she asked me what happened, and I told her. She was very understanding. She said she could give me another job to do, so I did not have to present in front of the class.

After class, my friends asked me what happened, and I told them. They were very compassionate with me. They helped me see how important it is to have people who support and help you.

I've Come a Long Way

Now, I still feel a little *anxious* when I need to speak in public, but I am doing much better. I

learned to manage my *anxiety* by trusting myself and knowing I am prepared. If my mind goes blank and my heart races, I take slow breaths and remind myself it will pass. I focus on the present moment so I don't get distracted. Even if I feel nervous, I know others may not notice. I know I will continue to improve. I am proud of my progress. I went from feeling too shy to say "here" when answering roll call, to being able to stand in front of others and give a presentation.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. In what ways has *anxiety* shown up in Tania's life? What are some of her strategies for managing it?

2. If you feel *anxious* or have *anxiety*, how do you manage it? Collect your strategies and your classmates' strategies in a Google doc or in a slideshow and share them with others.

Tania Guadalupe García Ruiz was a student at Ysleta Community Learning Center in El Paso, Texas. She graduated and was able to validate her college degree from Mexico. She now works at YCLC. Tania enjoys spending time with her family and her dog, who is part of the family too.