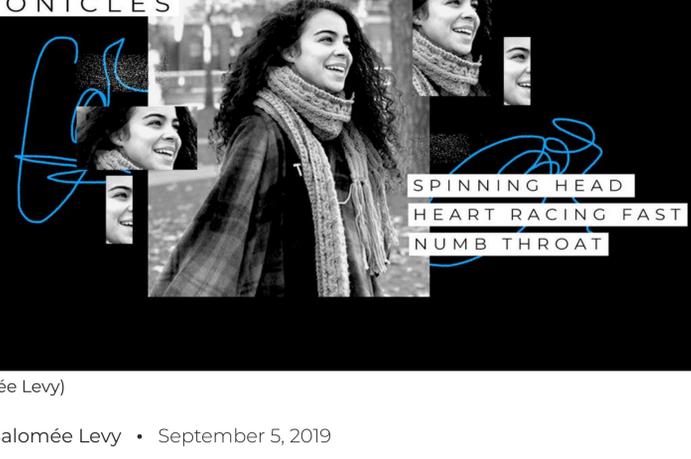


ANXIETY CHRONICLES // PERSPECTIVE ▾

It 'has been creeping up on me almost daily': This is how I experience anxiety

'Some people assume that anxiety doesn't exist in teenagers and that we are overreacting'

ANXIETY 62 CHRONICLES



(Courtesy of Salomé Levy)

Salomé Levy • September 5, 2019

Anxiety Chronicles is a series from *The Lily* that examines the journeys different women have with anxiety.

*This week, we hear from Salomé Levy, who lives in Las Vegas and is a national organizer on the [United States Youth Climate Strike Team](#). She also created national writing platform [We the Immigrants](#) to amplify the stories of immigrants. Her work has been previously published on *TeenVogue*, *StuVoice*, and in various poetry publications.*

*Interested in contributing to a future installment of *Anxiety Chronicles*? [Fill out this form](#).*

My history with anxiety

I first learned about anxiety when my mood ring turned from a purple to brown. Brown meant anxious. I learned about anxiety as I looked it up in the dictionary and later realized in middle school that I have it. I get anxiety around many things. Whether it is my personal life or my responsibilities, I feel anxious. I overthink what is going to happen and feel more pessimistic than optimistic, contributing to my overall anxiety where I cannot focus on what is going on.

With college application season approaching, anxiety has been creeping up on me almost daily. I generally feel anxious about where I will be a year from now. Will I go to my dream school? Will I be on my own or still with my family? I get anxious about how much I have to pay or if my test scores qualify and just feel like nothing is ever working out. I feel like I am stuck in this deep dark hole and never feel like I am growing.

How anxiety presents itself physically

When my anxiety appears, I tend to swallow more than I have to. When I am in a quiet classroom at school taking a test, I swallow a lot with thoughts racing and thinking that the people around can hear me swallow over and over. My throat gets numb as I focus more on how quiet the room gets, pushing me off track my focus.

When I am about to give a speech, my legs constantly tap against the floor, I gulp down more water than an average person does while asking myself over and over about what people will think and what might happen if I mess up. My heart races faster than usual, and I feel a slight discomfort in my chest along with feeling cold in a room that is not that cold.

How anxiety presents itself mentally

A lot of people see me as a carefree, calm and successful spirit. Of course, I look like everything is fine on the outside but really my thoughts are all over the place. If I had a visualization of how I feel mentally, it would be a canvas that just has scribbles all over. It feels like my head is constantly spinning as my heart beats faster. I constantly yell at myself inside my head for not being good enough or not performing at my full potential.

What a day when my anxiety is at its worst looks like

As the alarm rings at 6 a.m., my heart beats fast and my stomach is in pain. I just end up staying in bed until 7 a.m. when I actually have to leave the house and drive to school. I don't even think about taking care of my hair: I quickly tie it up in a loose bun and skip breakfast. I think about everything that is on my plate for the rest of the day and tie it to the rest of my future. I think more about what will happen in my future and make spontaneous decisions without giving them a second thought. I don't think clearly all day and my thoughts are racing.

My go-to coping mechanism

In public, on phone calls, or in the classroom, I tend to sing one of my favorite songs in my head. I just think of the rhythm, the background music and every lyric in the song to take my mind of my anxiety. I also like to focus on a certain object and describe its features in my head and give a critique on that object. I have been trying to stay off social media as much as possible lately because I feel like that contributes to my anxiety. The first thing I would open when I get anxiety is Instagram, and I feel like social media just makes it worse. When I am alone, I put in my ear buds and feel a whole different world outside of the one I am living. I am able to forget and cope by singing my heart out to the Jonas Brothers and just feel carefree about everything around me.

What I wish people knew about anxiety

I wish people knew that young and successful people get anxiety, too. I feel like it is hard for me to be vulnerable with someone because I get surprising responses such as, "Really? But you are so successful!" or "Wow, didn't expect that from you." Some people assume that anxiety doesn't exist in teenagers and that we are overreacting. If only people knew that teenagers had anxiety, they'd be able to connect with me more and become more empathetic. I feel like I would have trustworthy adults who I could talk to who could help me heal.



Salomé Levy

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