

15 May 2023

Living with Anxiety

For Mental Health Awareness Week, 15-21 May, read our rep's blog about how he lives with anxiety.

I live with Generalised Anxiety Disorder. My condition is controlled primarily through medication, but also coping strategies - but it still impacts me from one degree to another.

I first developed the disorder within work, a long time ago. I remember the trigger event but the injurious stresses had been building for some time and I had probably been unwell for quite some time at that point - when you are poorly, you sometimes cannot see it.

Nowadays I rely on two different medications - the most important one is taken to help with sleep. Without it I fall to sleep almost immediately when I go to bed, but would wake within an hour, wide awake, my mind a maelstrom of thoughts, worries, anxieties and unable to switch those thoughts off. The medication helps keep me asleep.

I find authority figures anxiety-making; strange for a rep but I don't find myself anxious when approaching for someone else, only when it is for me. I had to approach the union over a mistake in election bureaucracy and it brought about an attack. I have a micromanaging senior manager who likes to Skype and seeing their message pop up can cause an anxiety attack.

One way my mind tries to cope is through procrastination [putting things off that need doing], and that can be misconstrued by others looking in. If I have an anxiety attack, a proper one, I generally don't fight or flight - I freeze. Decision-making becomes a struggle. The adrenaline is sickening, my brain whirls too quickly, my emotions spike. If I anticipate a trigger approaching the next day it can cause my anxiety to overpower my night-time medication.

But I function; my condition is controlled... So, when you look at someone, remember that you don't know what is going on inside, what that person may be dealing with.

If you are a member experiencing anxiety, problems with your mental health or any workplace issues and need some support, please contact your local rep for advice.