

A Day in The Life of a GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder) Patient

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A Day in the Life of Mary

Mary's life is defined by worry. Whatever task she faces accompanies itself with a mountain of anxiety. Waking up, she stared at the ceiling wondering what the new day would bring. Mary is a 43-year-old white woman who suffers from GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder). Non-Hispanic white adults are in fact the most likely to experience GAD. Women are twice as likely to be affected by GAD. GAD can develop at any age but is most common in middle age (Boston Children's Hospital, n.d.). GAD is a mental condition that causes excessive and persistent worry about various aspects of everyday life, typically lasting six months or longer (Barlow, 2014). GAD often runs within families and has been proven to have high association with genetics (Rodriguez et al., 2023). Mary, as well as her mother, sister, and aunt all suffer GAD to varying degrees. In Mary's case, her symptoms are far more extreme. Her doctor linked the extremity of her case to her timid personality and childhood trauma she experienced where she lost her father in a car crash. Although the exact cause of GAD is unknown, shy personalities and childhood trauma have been shown to be linked to GAD (Boston Children's Hospital, n.d.-b).

Mary first started experiencing symptoms of her disorder in her adolescence. She would have frequent headaches, stomachaches, random pains, and always felt tired. Furthermore, she would have a hard time concentrating and was constantly worried about tiny things. She had later found out that these are symptoms of GAD (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], n.d.). She recalls her constant maddening worries, "Did I close my locker properly?! Did I put my homework in the right basket? What if my smile to Mrs. Thompson came off as a grimace?! I forgot to tell mom goodbye before school! What if she thinks I hate her?!" She shrugged recalling the memory. Mary's condition has since much improved thanks to effective treatment.

Psychotherapy and medications are proven to be effective in treating GAD and there are luckily known treatments to the disorder (Mayo Clinic, n.d.).

Mary takes a quick glance at her alarm clock, it read nine AM. Her mind races for a second entertaining that she was late for work, quickly reassured remembering it was Saturday. Mary was a graphic designer and was constantly worried about missing deadlines or falling short. The past week had been hectic for her. Getting a project done all while worrying the customer would hate it and she would be fired at last to be reassured by a visibly satisfied customer and a pay raise from her boss. She hoped that meant she would start on a new page today with nothing to worry about, knowing herself, she knew that hope was wishful thinking.

She decided she would treat herself by hanging out with her best friend at a coffee shop. She looked through her wardrobe, thinking about what she should wear. One after the other Mary looked through her clothes looking for the perfect attire for the occasion. However, for every dress she had criticism. “No, too fancy. No, too casual. No, too colorful. No, too many polka dots.” This continued until she had went through all of the clothes in her wardrobe, still indecisive, now worried. She checked the time, 10:12 AM, she was running late! She picked up a random dress from her wardrobe to wear and left her house for the coffee shop. All throughout the way she worried that the dress she wore didn’t fit the occasion or was too ugly.

She arrived ran into the shop and failed to find her friend. She immediately, began worrying. “What if I took so long, she left the shop? What if she doesn’t want to be friend with me anymore? What if I left a bad impression?” Her mind raced but was soon interrupted to see her friend coming to her table smiling with a coffee. “Hey Mary! How was your day?” she said. “I’ve had better days” she replied tiredly. Mary explained to her friend how she had began worrying a lot more and her condition has really taken a toll on her. Mary knew she had a degree

in Psychology, and she could definitely help. She smiled. “There are a number of ways you can help treat these! Make sure to keep physically active, get good sleep, eat healthy, and avoid drugs and alcohol.” She told her that these can help in treating the disorder (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], n.d.-b).

After a long relieving conversation, Mary left the shop at 2 PM and headed to her mother’s house. She hadn’t visited in a while and started feeling a tightness in her stomach. She was afraid she might be upset with her. Furthermore, on the way to her house, she had coughed and began thinking that perhaps she is sick! She started worrying that it may be something serious and couldn’t stop thinking about it. In her state of worry, she didn’t notice the stop sign in front of her and nearly had an accident! This didn’t help her worries one bit. “Oh my God! What if I crashed?! I could have died!”. She wasn’t feeling well and tried her to suppress her overwhelming worries.

She reached her mother’s house where she had spend good time with her mother telling her about her day and asked her for help. Her mother, similarly suffering her condition helped relieve her telling her not to worry these are common and that she was overthinking things.

At last, she returned home. She took her drugs to help treat her condition and headed to bed hoping things would get better tomorrow.

References

Example, A. (2020). *A print book title: An example citation*. Publisher Name.

Sample, A. B. (2019, December 31). *A web page title: An example citation*. Title of the Overall Website. URL

[1] Non-Hispanic white adults are the most likely to experience GAD. Women are twice as likely to be affected by GAD. GAD can develop at any age but is most common in middle age.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) | Boston Children's Hospital. (n.d.).

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad#:~:text=Who%20is%20affected%20by%20GAD,2.9%20percent%20to%204.6%20percent>

Products - Data Briefs - Number 378- September 2020. (n.d.).

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db378.htm#:~:text=Interview%20Survey%2C%202019.-,Summary,on%20the%20GAD%E2%80%9393%20scale>.

[2] Barlow, D. H. (Ed.). (2014). *Anxiety and its disorders: The nature and treatment of anxiety and panic* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

“Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterized by excessive worry about a variety of topics, events, or activities, lasting for six months or longer. The worry is difficult to control and is often accompanied by physical symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue, concentration difficulties, and muscle tension. The disorder tends to be chronic, with many individuals experiencing persistent symptoms throughout their lives. Treatment typically involves cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which has been shown to reduce worry and improve coping mechanisms over time.”

[3] Certain genes have been shown to be associated with high anxiety.

Rodriguez, D. a. L., Montes, L. U., Quiñones, B. J., Zamora, S., Moreno, L., Villamil, W., González-Giraldo, Y., Baez, S., Forero, D. A., & Trujillo-Güiza, M. L. (2023). PRKCA and TCF4 genetic variants in anxiety symptoms and generalized anxiety disorder in a sample of Colombian subjects selected on the basis of high anxiety scores. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.2174/0118743501266432231122062610>

[4] The exact cause of GAD is unknown, but is linked to genetic factors, biological factors, temperament factors (such as characteristics of being timid or shy), environmental factors
Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) | Boston Children's Hospital. (n.d.-b).

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad#:~:text=Who%20is%20affected%20by%20GAD,2.9%20percent%20to%204.6%20percent>

[5] Symptoms of GAD include excessive worry, trouble controlling worries, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, easily startled, constantly tired, headaches, stomachaches, unexplained pains, hard time swallowing, trembles and twitches, feeling “on edge”, sweat a lot, and the need to use the bathroom often

Generalized anxiety disorder: when worry gets out of control. (n.d.). National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad>

[6] Psychotherapy and medication such as anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication have proven to be effective in treating GAD

Generalized anxiety disorder - Diagnosis and treatment - Mayo Clinic. (n.d.).

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20361045>

[7] Physical activity, a healthy diet, and good sleep have been proven to help GAD

Generalized anxiety disorder: when worry gets out of control. (n.d.-b). National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad>