Lockdown Anxiety Diaries. Episode 1.

I was partying hard in Goa on New year’s Eve 2019, dancing my worries away and with the thoughts of a blissful new year. A promising dawn arrived on the morning of 1st January 2020 where in I felt so positive, so energized with a new born confidence to take over the world. I am sure many of you would have shared the same kind of feelings and thoughts. And on that positive note, the new year arrived with new hopes and ambitions for us all. Little did we know what lay ahead.

February arrived with little seeds of doubt in mind that something very wrong is about to happen in this world. And those doubts grew bigger everyday. But here in India there is so much festivity and celebratory atmosphere, that forces you to drive your worries away. However the joy was short-lived.

When March arrived, we all knew for sure that a dark shadow was upon us. The darkness of which will put our lives, our future, our will, our faith, all in jeopardy. By the time we finished celebrating Holi, a sudden lockdown was upon us. When the lockdown was announced on one fateful evening of 24th March, each and every one of us felt shit scared. We were all dumbfounded, complacent and had no choice but to just pray to the higher power to save us all from this disaster. The calamity which had struck, was so powerful that we human beings felt so powerless and defeated in the fight against it. The fight of Covid-19 virus, the fight that will change the destiny of the entire world was upon us.

For the first time, while listening to the PMs address to the nation, I think the entire 1.3 billion population was held together in one thread of humanity. To think that if any of us caught the virus, could transmit it to so many others and could become responsible for causing deaths, was a thought, that was so scary, that the contrary became an automatic choice.

I am sure none of us have even heard of such a lockdown before where you aren’t allowed out of your homes, where you should keep a distance from your loved ones, where you are all forced to stay where you are. My little mind was full of anxious thoughts and the claustrophobia kicked in from time to time telling me to just go to my balcony to get some fresh air. Lockdown meant being locked in to me. It was simple. And the anxiety that came in with that word was such a huge wave which just washed me in it’s waters and translated various meanings of being locked in.

Now a normal person might think, so ok – I have to be indoors and I have to only go out for essential food supplies and I have to keep a distance from people. I have to wear a mask and protect myself. And a person with anxiety will think, so ok – I have to be holed up in my house, where I can’t breathe. I have to stop seeing the only few friends that I have, I can’t visit anyone and there’s this disease that can just kill me. Murder me. In a way. And there’s no cure for it. Great. Oh I can’t breathe again. So I go out to the balcony where there’s lot of air, and try breathing again and try to calm my mind down that everything will be fine. It’s only a matter of few days where I have to follow all the rules and stay where I am.

This is the basic difference in the mind. The mind of a normal person and the mind of an anxious person. I have been an anxiety sufferer for a very long time. Although I have managed to cope with it in my everyday life, with the help of mindfulness and wellness sessions and yoga and meditation. But this lockdown announcement brought a fresh wave of anxiety which made all my efforts to cope with it so far vanish in thin air.

My effort to write this lockdown diaries of Anxiety is to bring an awareness in people’s mind about the various challenges that a person can face. And to all the anxiety sufferers out there a shout out – You are not alone. Many of us feel this way and it’s ok. The key lies in dealing with it and knowing that you aren’t alone is half the battle won. It brings a sense of security to the mind that many people are going through this and when so many can overcome this, so will I. That is my thought process.

Back to the night of the lockdown, I sat in my beanbag chair in my balcony thinking a million thoughts at a time. What the hell just happened? How did it suddenly happen? Is it really this serious? Then looking at all the world figures, the videos of people in Wuhan, China and the condition of Italy which has a seriously good healthcare structure by the way, seeing all that was going on in the world, I first thought, thank God. India has acted smartly. Proactively. And the next thought was again so scary. The fear of the unknown. The fear of what will happen to the millions of people in the world. The virus sees no race, caste or religion. Rich or poor. It just strikes it’s wrath and we are just left to deal with the consequences.

Being a healthcare professional, a Pharmacist, I knew certain things for sure. I knew how to take care of myself, I knew I will have to wear a mask and gloves and not touch anything when I go out. I knew I will need ration and food supplies at least for a month to keep me going, I knew I will have to sanitize anything and everything that entered my home. Be it a water bottle, a carton of milk or any fruits and vegetables. These are the basics and I knew I will have to be safe first then I can ensure about other’s safety.

My mother kept calling me quite a few times, but I thought I need to gather myself first, then I can speak to her to assure her I’ll be fine. It was a nightmare of a night. A start of a fight against something invisible, something so scary, and something which will change the face of the world. The first night of the lockdown will remain engraved in my heart and mind and it is definitely an experience that I will be telling tales about to my kids and grandkids for as long as I live.

Again the phone rang and I knew I should answer it now, otherwise she will worry. My mom will worry.

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