

Home Life... Broken glass

Situation:

My younger sister and I live together. Yesterday after I wiped off the kitchen counter I went to throw the paper towels into the trash and I noticed pieces of glass in the trash bag. That's when I started up.

Symptoms:

"Oh boy, something else broken! Again. What did she do now? I wonder if she cut herself in the process? She's not as careful with things like I am. I can't remember the last time I broke a glass. It seems like every time I turn around, Debbie's knocking over something. Just last week she knocked over a can of Coke and it got all over the kitchen floor. What a mess." I was feeling light headed, my heart was pounding, I felt short of breath.

Feeling so anxious that I think I'm not getting enough oxygen is a sign to me that I need to do something to relax. I used to find something to distract me. Now I know that's only a temporary fix – like a band aid. If I'm going to feel better I need to get to the bottom of things.

Solution:

I went and sat down. That was commanding my muscles to be still and motionless. I've learned to take a time out to stop and think about what I'm thinking. I've found that with practice, it only takes a few minutes of my time.

A broken glass is distressing, but not dangerous. I realized it was my imagination when I was thinking that maybe my sister cut herself. True, she is my younger sister. And, she is an adult, quite capable of taking care of herself, even if she gets a cut. I recognized that my excessive sense of responsibility was showing. I can't prevent her from ever getting hurt, even though I'd like to.

I was lumping together what happen, with other things that had happened on the past, other things that went "wrong." I realized I had left over anger from other incidents. So I let myself think about today's broken glass and said to myself, "She's not wrong, she's average." Things break. Period.

When I thought back to the incident with the Coke can I said, "She's not wrong, she's average." When I thought about the mud she tracked on the kitchen floor last spring I said, "She's not wrong, she's average." I must have sat there for a full five minutes thinking of all the little things from the recent and not-so-recent past. And every time I said, "She's not wrong, she's average."



Finally I got tired of thinking and replacing my thoughts and kind of laughed to myself. She really is average! Things break every day. Sometimes it's from carelessness. Sometimes things just happen.

In the past:

Before there would have been nothing humorous about it. I had this idea that material things should last forever. I guess I got that from our Father who didn't like to spend money, even on necessities. Now I can lower my standards, for my sister and myself. Neither one of us has to be perfect, and mistakes, like breaking things, are part of every day life. People do things "that" irritate us, not "to" irritate us. I'm sure she didn't throw a glass on the floor, sweep up the mess and dump it in the trash on purpose just to see how riled up I could get about it. Whatever happened it was average, an honest mistake. Most important it was a trivial incident compared to my mental health. I made a firm decision that I would control my speech muscles and not even bring the subject up. Before I really expected everything in life to be perfect and stay perfect. Now I know that's not reality.

