

Life... Church anxiety

S i t u a t i o n:

Sunday mornings are rough around here. Since I'm retired, I don't have to go out much at all if I don't feel like it. Sundays are a different story. My husband expects me to go to church. Don't get me wrong, I want to go. It's just that I get this really strong anxiety. I used to sing in the choir at our church. And I miss it. I've been a member of different church choirs for more than 20 years.

It's interesting, I was diagnosed with clinical depression and have been hospitalized several times in the past for it. Yet, when I even start thinking about going to church I get shaky and worried. Sometimes I can feel my heart beating faster too.

For the first time in a long time I half made up my mind to go to Sunday service for the last two weeks. Then Sunday morning comes and I talk myself out of going. Then I feel bad when I chicken out. As soon as my husband pulls out of the driveway I spend at least a couple of hours beating myself up. What can I do?

A n s w e r:

Yours is a common situation. When people start trying to venture out after they've cut back on activities because of depression or anxiety, it's common to feel uneasy. It's also common to talk yourself out doing what you think you want to do. Both your apprehension and your behavior are average. Not right, not wrong – simply average.

Right now it looks like you have the choice of either being uncomfortable staying home on Sunday mornings, or being uncomfortable going to church with your spouse. Which choice is better for your personal growth? When you do something you are afraid of doing, you'll feel better about yourself. You may not be 100% comfortable, but if you choose Church instead of staying home, you won't have to beat yourself for your decision and ruin the rest of your Sunday.

Especially from the beginning, don't judge your progress by how comfortable you are when you go out. Measure your progress by answering this simple question: "Did I do it?" If you answer, "Yes," then you've made progress. Period!

Remember it's not the place, the church that you're afraid of. It's being afraid of feeling afraid that's got you worried. Going to church or anyplace else where people go on a regular basis may be upsetting to you – but it is not dangerous. If it were dangerous, millions of people around the world wouldn't be doing it on Sunday mornings.

The best thing you can do to get over your anxiety is to keep facing your uncomfortable feelings, whether they pop up when you want to go to church, the movies or the mall.



It's going to take practice. The more you face your fears, and tell yourself that you're safe, you're in no real danger, the more your physical symptoms of anxiety will diminish. Each time you venture out, by choice, and face something difficult, the more you show that you're in charge, instead of your fear being in charge.



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