

Bethel Leader: Practical Steps to Break Free From Your Toxic Panic

Do you struggle with fear and anxiety? Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older. However, anxiety and fear are not new bullies on the block. They've been around since the fall of humanity, and I bet that even if you don't have an anxiety disorder, you've faced fear about your life at some point or another.

When fear strikes, it's important that you don't let it turn into a cycle of anxiety; that never ends pretty. I know this full well as years back, I went through my own personal hell with panic attacks and eventually a complete nervous breakdown. I'm here today to tell you that it is in fact possible to break free from this bondage and live an abundant life. Stand on my own testimony of freedom today, and I'd love to share some things I've learned along the way that I hope will help you.

Understanding the Ecosystem of Fear

You cannot conquer what you don't confront, and you can't confront what you don't acknowledge. So, I want to break down how a cycle of panic and fear can form. Let's take a look:

1. Fear has an ecosystem. Fear distorts the facts and retells the story towards a negative outcome. The anticipation of a negative outcome increases my anxiety, which unleashes more adrenaline in my body. Greater levels of adrenaline cause an increase in my toxic thoughts. This increased toxicity releases more the beat goes on until I finally have a panic attack.
2. When negative thoughts are not resisted, but instead

cultivated by dwelling on them for more than a few hours, they become attitudes. Attitudes are a “way” of thinking. So I go from a bad thought to a bad way that I process information. Eventually, I become pessimistic. Pessimism (the attitude of negativism) actually attracts more bad thoughts, which again creates an ecosystem of anxiety.

3. The ecosystem of pessimism inspires a faithless culture that affects the people around me. When they embrace my fearful, pessimistic and thankless attitude, they extend the culture of anxiety.
4. Over time, this culture of fear becomes a lifestyle of pain, panic and powerlessness.

How to Break Free From a Cycle of Anxiety

A lifestyle of panic (although I know it *feels* real) is an illusion because all things work together for good in my life in the end (Rom. 8:28). So if it's not good, it's not the end. We can't always help what happens to us or around us, *but* we have 100 percent control over what happens in each of us. Here are steps I practice for breaking out of the cycle of fear:

1. **The fear cycle is broken** when I take control of my thoughts, instead of them controlling me. Then, I proactively retell each fearful story according to God's good intention. Slowly the adrenaline subsides and dopamine (the feel-good chemical) is released in my body, which causes me to “feel” the reality of my divine outcome. (See 2 Corinthians 10:3-6).
2. Thankfulness is the simplest way to inoculate myself from fear because I can't “feel” gratitude and “feel” fearful at the same time.
3. I practice biblical meditation. I can proactively control the level and frequency of thankfulness in my life. I simply make a list of all the good things that have happened in my life and the good words spoken about me. Then I envision them as I repeat them to myself.

This is biblical meditation. (read Phil. 4:4-9 and Josh. 1:1-8).

4. I transform my life by renewing the way I think. Any thought that doesn't inspire hope in me is rooted in a lie. I reject any thought that inspires hopelessness and search for thoughts that infuse me with hope. I can't afford to have a thought in my mind that isn't in God's mind because I have been granted the mind of Christ!

Today I want to challenge you to take charge of your life and the thoughts that are running through your mind. Remember that if this is something you struggle with, nothing is impossible with God. He can and will set you free. Today, I pray that as you read through these four steps, God will show you exactly how they can apply in your life. May the God of truth guide you into all understanding, and may you be covered, head to toe, in His supernatural peace today. I declare freedom and love over you even as you read this.

Have you been trapped in the ecosystem of fear? Have you made your way out? I'd love to hear your process, thoughts and testimonies in the comments. {eoa}

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