

Welcome to Week #2 of VisibleU May!

"That's it ... I've really just had it No one else has to deal with everything I have to deal with. If one more thing goes wrong I'm really just going to scream."

Or

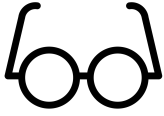
"I've got everything I ever wanted ... a great husband ... beautiful children ... my dream job ... and a lovely home ... I have no right to complain about anything."

Stress can take control of our attention, our thoughts and even our behavior. But that process of it taking control can be silent or invisible. The central nervous system that translates our stress into thoughts, feelings and actions, is an elegant system that can engage without any conscious awareness or warning.

A panic attack is a good example of just how autonomous the stress response can be. Hopefully you don't have personal experience with what a panic attack feels like, because it's terrifying. But a hallmark of panic attacks is that they seem to come out of nowhere. They very often happen *outside* of any objectively stressful circumstance, and so without any clear triggering event.

This was my experience as well. Years ago I'd been working in my regular 'day' job and doing a project in my free time on evenings and weekends. I had logically been aware that it was all adding up to a lot of hours. And I had done my best to use the tools I had at that point in my life to take care of myself. I ate healthily and exercised regularly. I did guided meditations somewhat frequently. But I probably wasn't fully connected to how vulnerable, lonely and exhausted I was feeling as it was wrapping up. If I had been more connected to those things, I could have done a better job watching over my teapot and giving myself more rest and time for fun and connection with others.

But I was in "get it done" mode. So at what seemed like the weirdest time, when it was all finally finished, I had my first panic attack. I logically knew very



well what it was, but I still felt as if I was going to fly to pieces or have a heart attack for a good ten minutes.

It tipped off a few days of anxiety about having another panic attack (which is another classic symptom of anxiety). But finally I was able to pull out of it and was forever humbled to the power of my emotion ... the full real extent of it. The experience taught me a whole new level of respect for the complicated task of being emotionally honest with yourself. Logically telling yourself you are "fine" without really checking in to check that out ... can have real consequences.

My goal for this month is to inspire you to lovingly respect your own needs for self-care ... even when they might not be convenient or may not even 'feel' necessary.

Sometimes what we stress about can seem illogical. Often times it can be. But the need that stress signifies is ALWAYS real. Logic or intention for more strength can't "get rid" of stress. Yes there are moments when we need to push ourselves. But that can't be a way of living.

Back in the day of predator/prey existence, there was no time to thoughtfully consider whether or not a cracking twig might be a bird or a hungry tiger. We needed stress to engage that self-preservation autopilot.

Thankfully in much of the first world, we do not encounter mortal danger very often. And we can live in that gratitude by taking the time we now have, to go beyond striving for survival and give ourselves compassion when we need it.

With love and tremendous gratitude,

The Visible Self