



CONSCIOUS TRANSITIONS

What If I'm Not
Attracted to My Partner?

Sheryl Paul

Over the years, I've written dozens of articles on lack of attraction, some of which [you can find here](#).

In this booklet, you'll find four men's stories, all whom struggled with attraction at some point and all of whom broke free from their anxiety using the tools and principles they learned in the [Break Free From Relationship Anxiety Course](#). The reason why I focused on men for this booklet is because lack of attraction tends to be the primary hook where relationship anxiety hangs its hat for men. They're sold the bill of goods that the level of physical attractiveness (as determined by our very warped culture) is a measure of their own worth; [that their partner's "beauty" elevates their own status](#) in the eyes of others.

But by no means is the attraction spike exclusive to men. If lack of attraction is one of the places where your anxiety hangs its hat (anxiety likes to change stories and hooks) – as it was thousands of women who have taken my courses – read on.

This booklet also elucidates how relationship anxiety can hit at any time, from almost immediately to decades into marriage, and affects a cross-cultural population as these four men hail from Australia, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and Ireland:

Brent: Found my work in his late 30s. Anxiety hit almost immediately.

MohTA: Found the course at age 35. Anxiety hit on the third date.

Leo: Found my work at in his late 20s. Anxiety hit as soon as he knew he was going to propose. As of 2019, he's been happily married for six years.

Gerard: Gerard found my work at age 40. Relationship anxiety hit after 22 years of marriage when their son left for college.

BRENT

When Brent posted [a comment on this blog post](#), I knew I needed to reach out to hear his full story. I had never met him in any capacity - not as a client, a course member, or even through my blog - but when I read his comment I felt compelled to learn more. Below is our email interview, where he graciously, compassionately, and generously shares his story.

Please share your age, marital/dating status, and geographic location.

I'm a 39 year old male, married for 2 years on October 11, 2017 and I met my wife in our home town of Sydney Australia in February of 2013.

How soon into the relationship did your anxiety begin?

My anxiety began almost immediately, let's say after about 2 weeks. We first met at a rock gig. On my way there I was telling myself, "I'm soooo looking forward to falling in love." I felt ready. We met and the energy between us was instant. We talked and had a fun couple of hours getting to know one another before heading our separate ways. The following week we did somewhat the same with the end of the night walking hand in hand for the first time and discovering how truly aligned we were on a spiritual level.

The week following, so just over 2 weeks after initially meeting, my anxiety began to creep in.

What were your symptoms?

It started with me picking at the way she ate, how fast she ate and whether she made too much noise while eating. Then it moved to me having issues with what she was wearing. There was one occasion where I simply could not get past how much I disliked one of her dresses. It obsessed my mind so much and caused me to enter a dark and heavy place. I would make these little comments like "have you thought about wearing this or that?" or "do you like what she's wearing over there, perhaps you could think about wearing something like that?"

We would talk on the phone and have such wonderful conversations, yet as soon as we were together my judgement of her would begin again. It wasn't like it felt good to me to think this way either, it was killing me on the inside. It made me feel dark and heavy and completely outside of myself. On one occasion we went to one of her friends place for dinner and drinks. She was feeling relaxed and wore tracksuit pants. To me this was not acceptable. The whole night was ruined because of my mood and how I was judging her for what she was wearing. On the way home we had a massive fight and I felt like throwing myself out of the moving car door. I was so sick to death of myself and feeling this way.

What was your main spike/hook?

I guess my spike was the need for perfection, which led to judgements on my part. I judged her for almost everything. I didn't understand what was happening. I'd been down this road so many times before with at least 3 other woman. I just wanted to it to stop! I felt miserable. I hated myself for the thoughts I was having about her looks, her clothes, her sense of humour, pretty much everything. How had I gone from only days before being on the phone for 4 hours knowing deep within myself that I had met the love of my life, to the next picking her to pieces with my cruel judgements. Most of these I might add were kept to myself. I would make the odd comment here or there, but most of the heavy stuff I kept to myself and sank lower and lower into something close to madness or psychosis.

What was most helpful in terms of working through these spikes?

One evening I was sitting in my room thinking about things, thinking about my ongoing story in regards to relationships and I could clearly see that I was the common denominator. Every time this happened to me in the past I would keep it to myself until I would end it and walk away. Each and every time the anxiety left with me! Taking me months or years to get rid of. It was time to do something different and to tell her what I had been thinking. I hoped this would work based on my history.

I'll digress a little now to share that so that you have some perspective.

In my early 20's I began to have what I now know were intrusive thoughts. It began with a fear that I was gay. I became petrified that what if I am gay, what would this mean for my life, will I have to start going to gay bars and meeting a whole bunch of new people. The first time this thought came to me was smoking marijuana with some mates. I was paranoid, I was freaked out and then once this thought came to me it got stuck. I'd never thought this before, but all of a sudden I started to wonder and fear that maybe I was gay, even though I was still very much attracted to woman!

Following this thought I then began to fear that I was a paedophile. I began fearing children; I couldn't stand to see them just in case I had an impure thought. It wasn't like I fantasised about them, I was afraid I had the potential to do it, or that I could somehow hurt them. This was so terrifying to me that I would cry myself to sleep, all the while asking why me?! How could I ever become a father if this is the type of person I am?

The thoughts continued. I then began to believe that I could be a serial killer, that I could be a predator of some sort. The idea of killing someone became something that I thought I may be able to do, which then led me to think about killing myself. I never really wanted to do it, more so I was afraid that I had no control over myself, that I couldn't stop myself from doing it.

I then moved on to a fear of hurting and molesting animals. I thought that if I could do it to a human then I could do it to an animal too. I felt so disgusted with myself I didn't know what to do. How could I share any of this with anyone? I never told anyone what was going inside my crazy head. I eventually became convinced that I was in fact crazy, that I was possibly schizophrenic.

All of these thoughts came and went each and every day for about 3 years. During this time I was so moody. I sought solace in drugs and alcohol where I only made things much worse I'm sure. I was working with my dad at the time and so often I would talk to him in a demeaning way. He would ask what the hell was wrong with me and I'd say nothing. It wasn't until a final day where on my way to work the pain I felt was so bad I began to punch the wall of a bus stop until my knuckles bled. I got to work and lied that I had been in a fight. Then I collapsed and couldn't walk. My body gave out on me and I cried uncontrollably for a long time. My dad was beside himself and didn't know what was going on... so I told him. I told him EVERYTHING.

Dad didn't know what to do, so I went to a doctor. The doctor then sent me to a psychologist. Each time I told them what was going on in my mind I felt a weight lift. I felt detached from it rather than feeling that it was me. I was prescribed a high dose of Zoloft (an anti depressant) and was diagnosed as having obsessive-compulsive disorder. Mine was obsessive thoughts of course.

Fast forward a year or two and I felt happy and free of these thoughts for the very first time. All until I met someone. Then the thoughts came back to a degree and shifted to them as the object of my obsession.

I won't go into those relationships now, but bringing it back to my relationship now, here I was in my room and I had made the decision to tell her what was in my mind as I knew from past experience that this would give me relief, or at least I hoped that it would.

I framed it in such a way so as to say "I know I've been a real bastard of late and that's because I've been thinking terrible thoughts that make me feel bad. Let me stress that these thoughts don't really have anything to do with you, they are just my fucked up mind" I told her my past, everything that I mentioned above. I told her then some of the things I had been thinking about her. I really hurt her by saying these things. Yet doing so opened up a dialogue between us that enabled us to move forward and enabled me to move past my anxiety for the first time. We had a few good months from there where life became much better. I was still having intrusive thoughts, but I was doing my best not to attach to them and my partner and I had tried to make a joke of them when they came up, like when she had her hair up and I didn't like it, and would say "I really like you hair down", she would say "are you judging me again?" And I would say... ahhh yeah... and we would have a little laugh about it.

Fast forward a few years now and our relationship was not good. I just wanted to be away from her. I had started thinking about other woman and how perhaps there could be someone more perfect, more beautiful, more this or that for me. In a way there were moments where I felt disgust. I hated myself for all of it. I was dark and stormy and not a fun person to be around. We started to sleep in separate beds, me

on the floor and her in the main bed. We then went a little further and I was sleeping in another room altogether. Our relationship was truly at a breaking point. She was sick of the way I was treating her (never physically, just by me being distant, negative and depressed) and she basically said that if things don't change that she wouldn't put up with it for much longer, that life was too short. I just had no idea how to stop my thoughts, how to dig myself out of the hole. That night I Googled some topics of relationships and the results came back, doubt means don't. Here I was yet again in a relationship with a beautiful woman, an incredible human and I was having enormous doubts and crippling anxiety. So based on my research I figured that wow, I guess I'm in the wrong relationship after all.

On the same night I came across an article by Sheryl Paul, I wish I could remember which one it was, but it's safe to say that this was the moment that changed my life forever.

I began to read about this thing called relationship anxiety. It was such a relief to read another way of looking at things, and being very intuitive, I immediately knew I was reading a deep truth. I delved into more of her articles and was BLOWN away when I came upon articles that spoke of my previous intrusive thoughts from so many years before. I cried tears of joy 😊 I hadn't felt so happy in a very long time. A weight lifted from me instantly and for the first time I didn't feel like there was something wrong with me. It is so hard living life constantly feeling like there's something wrong with you.

I very quickly made the decision with my now Wife's full support to purchase the course "Break Free from Relationship Anxiety" and dove head and feet in. I did all the reading, all the writing, everything I possibly could. The more I did the more my relationship improved. I shared every piece of the puzzle with my wife along the way too. She could see the change in me and was just so happy that the man she fell in love with was coming back!

During this period I decided to do a 90-day alcohol free challenge too. You see during all of this I was still drinking alcohol almost daily. It was always my elixir of choice, yet I knew it wasn't helping matters. So yes I took 90 days off it and felt great! I felt so good that I was more than happy to only go back to it in moderation after that, but that didn't last long. Pretty soon I was back to old tricks and back to feeling dark and anxious. We went away on a holiday to sunny Queensland and I was miserable. I had been back drinking for 6 months and it was like I had never taken any time off it. On that trip I made the decision to stop for a full year. I got to 120 days and was then so happy without it that I decided once again that I would only drink again very occasionally. That only lasted a couple of months.

On 17/07/2017 I went on a bender. I got so drunk that the next day something snapped in my mind. For the first time I made a true decision to never drink again. That was 74 days ago as I write this. I don't fear not drinking any longer, in fact I'm looking forward to the rest of my life as a sober man!! You'd think that being sober would be all I needed to do to stay anxiety free right? Think again.

How would you describe yourself and your relationship now?

So here I was just under 2 months ago, sober. I was eating well. I was exercising 5 to 6 days a week. I was doing well in my job. Yet I was still a miserable bastard and once again my relationship was taking a dive. We had done so well and been through so much, but here we were again at another point where it seemed like it could be over. What was I to do?

I quit coffee. That was a start. I felt the effects pretty quickly actually. I was only having 1 or 2 per day, but it was adding fuel to my anxious body and mind all the time. I was constantly on edge and wasn't really aware of it until I stopped. I plateaued and my energy levels started to feel normal again. Yet I still wasn't happy.

I'm a creative person, I write and play music, I was doing lots of music, yet I still wasn't happy. What the hell was the missing link?

I said to my wife one afternoon that I felt I had no space. She took it the wrong way and asked if I wanted her to leave, I said no! No the space I think I'm talking about is in my head. I would work all day, listen to music or podcasts on my way home and then watch TV at night. I never had any moments of peace in my mind and my head was feeling like it was going to explode! So I suggested that we could start meditating. My wife agreed and she also suggested that we could write in a daily journal answering the following questions: How do I feel today and why? What am I grateful for? What do I want?

That afternoon we went shopping and purchased a leather bound book for writing in. We then go home and put some relaxing music on and answered the questions. It felt so good to write these things out, to acknowledge how I was feeling, to take stock of what I was grateful for and to consider what I wanted for myself. I wrote things like "I want to feel calm, confident, content and happy"

We then meditated untimed for over 20 minutes. A calm came upon me like I had not experienced in a very long time. I was in my body. I felt the pain I had been feeling that had been pent up for such a long time and I cried. I released so much through this simple practice. We both spoke afterward and truly counted our blessings and felt more connected than ever. We decided that this needed to be a daily practice for us, and we have now been doing this daily for over 30 days.

In addition to this we began eating our meals together in silence, not in front of the TV. At first this was very uncomfortable and my judgements began simmering to the surface, but the longer we ate like this, the more we engaged in conversation about our day and our feelings, the more this experience became something we actually look forward to. I feel comfortable in my skin (most days) and so does she. I love her for who she is, just as she is and rarely consider the previous perceived imperfections.

The last thing that we did was change the type of programs we were watching. Previously we would watch whatever, many of which were violent or filled with sex drugs and the extreme. For the first 20 days we watched nothing but documentaries on nature and animals. We then moved onto watching comedies. Input that helps us

feel good and inspires us and doesn't leave us feeling anxious or scared is now what we crave more so than the old dose of typical over the top TV.

What would you say to someone who's on the fence about purchasing the course and thinking things like, "I'm the worse case scenario" or "This work doesn't apply to me; I'm just in the wrong relationship" or "What if I do the work and I find out that my truth is that I'm with the wrong person?"

Through Sheryl's teachings I have come to understand that a relationship takes work. It's not all roses and full of lustful moments; it is far more like warm oatmeal. Both my wife and I now totally get it and understand that the most important thing is that you are with someone whom you can work on love with. Love is an action, not a feeling you get. It's something that you need to strive for by constantly growing as individuals. By being willing to compromise. By being compassionate to yourselves and each other.

Sheryl's course told me that my anxiety was in fact my friend telling me that there was something that needed my attention. In my life, that was getting off alcohol and coffee and including a daily practice of meditation and reflection. Being very much on the sensitive side of the spectrum I could not be like so many other people I know who can get away with floating on the hustle bustle. No, I needed to strip back to the bare necessities as too much stimulus overloads me and leaves me disconnected from my true and wonderful self.

If you are like me then you will no doubt have the thought that this course may have helped others, but I'm different, I can't be helped because I'm too messed up, or I'm just with the wrong person and that this is the reason it's not working the way it "should". But let me set you straight. You are just like the rest of us. You are just like me in that you are stopping yourself from finding happiness because you are protecting yourself. You don't need to continue with that as the universe has your back. Sheryl has your back and so does everyone else who has already completed and succeeded through this course.

It won't be easy. It's not like you can just read a few articles and everything will be okay. No. You are going to have to feel some pain. You are going to have to make some changes to how you operate in life, because if you don't then you are only going to end up with the same results. Do you get that? The time for change is right now.

There is no other source that I know of for this information and for this method of awakening. Sheryl is the master and her course is worth 10 times what you pay for it.

If the person you are with is someone who you can work on love with. If they are someone who supports you on your quest here, or even if they aren't! You will become a better version of yourself. Your relationship with them will improve I guarantee. If mine can, anyone's can! You will discover that it isn't that you are with the wrong person; it is that you are not the person you are meant to be. It's time to wake up and become aware of you! You are amazing. Yet you are sensitive and thus you need to perceive the world through a different lens and take it easy on yourself.

Give yourself more love and affection. Give yourself more quiet time to feel and reflect. You will never regret doing this course, but I think you'd definitely regret *not* doing it.

Any last words of reassurance, comfort, or inspiration.

I completed the course over a year ago and since that time my anxiety has risen and fallen depending on how I am treating myself. I've learned as a result of taking this course that this is who I am, and if I want to feel happier and more in love with my wife and life, then I need to do those things which support this. My journey will be lifelong, and yet it need not be a battle. My anxieties have shown me the path to peace. By hearing their silent call I have been drawn closer and closer to who I truly am, and I have no doubt that this will continue until I am old and grey.

Anxiety is only frightening when we don't understand its purpose for being. Now that I know it is my friend, rather than shrinking away from it, I stop to say thank you and lean in to hear what it whispers. Create some space in your life to do the same and you'll be amazed at how simple the changes are that need to be made. So simple in fact that anyone can do it, even you.

I wish you all well on your journey, trust me in that with Sheryl Paul, you are in the safest most divine hands you could ever imagine.

Lots of love.

Brent

MohTA

I was so pleased that MohTA was willing to share his story in an email interview as I knew how devastated he was by the physical spike and how hard he worked to break free from his fears and illusions so that he could see his partner clearly. Please note that English is not his first language.

Please state your age. And if you've been on the forum please share your forum name.

I am 36 years old and my forum name is MohTA

How soon into the relationship did your anxiety begin?

Well, I have 2 answers to this question and I have to elaborate a little about it

First, my anxiety began literally on the 3rd date of my relationship
Second, I discovered later on, throughout my healing / breaking free journey, that my anxiety was there alongside all my previous relationships but I was always choosing to escape, and so never had the chance to "name" it, and was always escaping after a period of suffering believing that the problem was in the partner I was with. But fortunately, I didn't escape from this relationship, and I chose to fight and go through this healing journey until I became able to name it, see it and, for the first time, to understand that this is anxiety and it is all about me and my partner has literally nothing to do with it.

What were your symptoms?

I suffered from several and severe symptoms. I have to say at first that it was very painful, it was painful at both levels, physiological and psychological, and I can tell all people who are suffering, please be sure that I know how you feel now, it is not only you and it is meant to be painful, this is irony of it that you will only understand if you choose to go through it rather than to escape from confronting it!

Physiologically speaking, I suffered from intense and frequent chest tightness, increased (or at least feeling of) heart rate, strong tingling sensations in my chest, throat, hands and tongue sometimes. I suffered also from general fatigue and lack of ability to exercise and to move sometimes! At many moments, I was pretty sure that am going to have a serious heart disease or something like this! Oh that was painful!

Psychologically speaking, this was very tough. I was suffering from different levels of intense emotions, starting from feeling depressed, to losing hope that I can be ever happy again if I stay with my partner, to losing hope of a good life, to feeling that am a bad person and deserves what is happening to me or this would not happen! To a painful feeling of losing sense of life. I felt at times that this life has no meaning and if I lose it, this is very OK for me.

It is worth to mention here that all these symptoms are only a brief of what I could express about symptoms I really suffered from.

What was your main spike/hook?

This question is among the top ones that has driven me to share my experience in hope to help others; this is because I suffered from severe spike of losing attraction toward my partner, and as a man suffering from this, it was not only very powerful and painful, and not only very difficult as it is related to the “visual” or “image” which is, as I personally think, very convincing and leave you with no doubt that this is true (unlike other less visual spikes), it was, on top of all that, very painful as I didn't find a lot of men in the forum suffering from the same spike, and so was hardly able to believe that this could be anxiety and that it means it is a true thing for me and not anxiety.

And I'd like to explain more about it as I am sure it will relate to some other men:

When I met my partner, and for the first couple of dates, I was doing fine, and my attraction to her was fine. I was excited to know her more, and was positive toward this relationship. Starting from the 3rd of 4th date maybe, everything started to change, and it was aggressively rapid; I started to see wrong things in my partner looks. The way I saw her totally changed. I became seeing her much below average whether on how her face looks like, her body, her smile, her hair, and on every single detail of her physical appearance! This started to drive me crazy, it developed more negative with time; I started to not tolerate being with her, I started to be addicted at comparing her to other girls, I became addicted to observe how other girls look like and started to find most of them much more beautiful than my partner, and trust me, this is very painful and can lead you to get crazy if you don't escape this relationship and simply find a more beautiful girl.

At that phase, there was something tiny that I couldn't recognize that was telling me to stay and that this person is good and that am exaggerating in my perceptions. But because it was very aggressive and “true”, I couldn't tolerate, and I started to search for assurances from some friends around (and honestly, this is something bad to do and I don't recommend people to do it!).

So I started to ask some close friends about her and what they think about her and her looks, and my friends' reactions were of course of being shocked from my questions stating that this is something personal for me to look at, but I insisted to ask, and they were then answering being surprised of what am saying and that she is very good (and indeed she is, but it took me a journey to notice this ☺)

Then I gratefully found Sheryl website and started the Break Free from Relationship Anxiety course, and here is where the journey started. It was a long and painful journey; it was a journey that I may need hours to write about. Briefly, it started (and lasted for a time) with a feeling of hopelessness that even this program couldn't help as I didn't feel any improvement. But I insisted to be patient and to go on with the work. I passed through sufferings and sufferings and was about to lose my partner

several times throughout the journey, I was like in a boat in the middle of a very big storm... it took its time, until I started to see the light again, I started after a time of a continuous work to see the reality. Gradually, things started to change, I reached a point that I couldn't believe how such program, such readings, such journaling and exercises can really change the way I see my partner physically! It is amazing how you change from feeling that all this is ridiculous and a work in vain, to starting to feel how things is really changing. Now, and with the way I see partner, I really look back and smile; life is really full of lessons to learn.

What was most helpful about the course in terms of working through these spikes? What tools or practices do you still use today on a daily basis or when anxiety takes hold?

I went thoroughly throughout all the course's tools, readings and videos. And having my spike diminished gradually, I couldn't isolate a single tool or aspect of the course to say that this specific one is what helped me, but I would say that it helped me as a whole. I was consistent in journaling; general one and specific journaling exercises that the course teaches you to do, and that was helpful. I dug deep in my internal world, all aspects of my psyche. I explored and worked out tools that help me to heal my emotional and spiritual realms. I practiced mindfulness continuously, and it was very helpful. All this helped me, WITH TIME, to feel, realize and understand more and more how all what I feel is related to my Self, to my own issues and mistaken beliefs, and how am only projecting this on the external environment; specifically on my partner, to say that she is the reason of my sufferings and that's it! It took me efforts and time to understand this difficult equation, to accept and feel that my own issues can be projected PHYSICALLY on my partner!

As of today, I am of course not doing exercises with the same intensity and consistence as before, but from time to time, am still doing mindfulness, still reflecting on my Self, emotionally and spiritually when I have any intrusive thoughts, through journaling sometimes, or meditating on the thoughts in other times

How would you describe yourself and your relationship now?

I never expected and never had hope to answer this question in the way am going to do now:

I am simply having the best time and best feelings about myself and my partner ever in my life! I am having a truly blessed and happy relationship. Every day I feel blessed of how much I love my partner, of how much I see her beautiful and attractive. I am now addicted to telling people how am happy with her, how amazing she is, how lucky am being with her, and how much am proud to be with her in front of myself and in front of people!

What would you say to someone who's on the fence about purchasing the course and thinking things like, "I'm the worse case scenario" or "This work doesn't apply to me; I'm just in the wrong relationship" or "What if I do the work and I find out that my truth is that I'm with the wrong person?"

First, it is really painful for me to know that whatever I try to say here may only hardly make sense to you or may not at all, because I was there... I was thinking exactly and specifically that I was the worst case scenario and that it was simply true for me, I know how powerful is what you feel now... But let me ask you an opposite question, and just be sincere with yourself; please assume that you've just met a person that you trust blindly, and someone who is taken for granted for whatever he says as a source of great wisdom who rarely misjudges, and you told him about what you are passing through with depth, and he answered you *"mmm, I think you are in a wrong relationship and you have to leave it"*. Please think for a while.. and describe how would you react then to him or to the subject in general? Would you accept what he is saying and feel totally relaxed and comfortably decide to leave the relationship or would you resist and feel uncomfortable and maybe start to argue with him that he might be wrong? I am confident that if you think sincerely about this, the answer will be the second choice! And this must tell you that although you feel yourself the worst case scenario now (which I totally understand and relate to), but it doesn't mean anything about your relationship.. and so this work definitely applies to you, but it needs its time.. it needs patience and hard work until you can realize how it applies for you.. have faith.. just have faith.

I stayed for a while feeling the same, and was very certain that this work doesn't apply to me, and my continuous and increasing lack of attraction toward my partner accompanied with feeling unhappy and sad made me very sure that the relationship is wrong and can never be about such psychological dimension called anxiety! Only faith what helped me to keep standing up and to fight... only faith what helped me to go through the anxiety journey, to take the course, and ONLY gradually and after a while from working throughout the course when other factors started to arise and help the faith to support me.. to show me the right way more and more, until I made it out!

What would you say to men, in particular, who are struggling with the attraction spike?

This is the main reason why am writing this. I was simply a man who started a relationship, and shortly lost physical attraction to my partner! Simple, very visual, convincing and doesn't need philosophy, right?!

Thank God I didn't take it that simple at that time, because I would not be with her now if I did!

As a man who passed through this, I know how convincing is this, I know how clear and visual it is, I know how such a man can feel irritated, sad, shame sometimes, how you can feel desperate and that you are stuck in the worst place ever. I remember when I sent Sheryl a couple of emails at the beginning of the course, I even used the word "UGLY" describing my partner! Oh God! How difficult it was, and how tough I was on myself and my judgment to her. And what added to me is that I

didn't find a lot of men on the course's forum who are there because of lack of attraction spike, so I was double more sure that it was not anxiety and it was true for me.. this is why am sharing my experience here. I WAS TOTALLY WRONG!!!

To brief my feelings now and what would I say to men suffering from attraction spike in one statement: The UGLIEST thing I did at that phase of anxiety was not only the way I used to describe my partner with (even if secretly), but how I didn't see her as truly, faithfully and realistically of the most PHYSICALLY attractive ladies I have ever met! Now.. and after breaking through from relationship anxiety, I can trustfully tell you.. You can make it! I made it, and now I see my lovely partner as the most amazing person ever, physically and on many other domains.

When you were listening to the ten audio interviews at the end of the course did you ever think you would be one of those people being interviewed?

This is a very sweet but funny question to me. Because at the beginning, anxiety was very strong to me, and I was desperate to a level that I was thinking the ten audio interviews are just fake and arranged set up from Sheryl to keep people in hope 😊

Having being interviewed today. Oh my God, my tears are falling! Just want to say guys that I swear this is true and not fake (LOL), and you can all make it and be here and be in the happiest relationship you will ever have, because this course will not only help you to enjoy a lovely relationship with your true partner, but will help you to know yourself, to develop your wisdom and to enjoy life as never before.

LEO

Interview with Leo November 2012

1. How long have you been with your partner? When did you get engaged? Married?

We've been together for about 2 years now. We got engaged fairly early, at about 1 year, and got married 9 months later.

2. Tell me about your relationship anxiety and what you were struggling with when you first contacted me?

As soon as I knew that this is someone who I could marry, I felt the weight of the decision more, and while I was happy about being with her, there were all these *other* feelings too. Being a very introspective person, immediately I began searching inside for "what do these feelings mean?" "Am I making a mistake?" "Oh God, what did I do, I lied to her", and quickly spiraled into a frenzy of anxiety. The fear and anxiety made distant any sort of warm and loving feelings, which added to the "oh no, I deceived her and myself, I made a terrible mistake" feelings. It was all very confusing, as I knew I loved her, but I began to experience severe projection towards her. In my rational mind I knew that things that bothered me a lot were not a big deal, but for some reason I could not let it go. It was a very confusing and very uncomfortable time. There was a lot of frantic soul searching, no sleep, no eating, and one late night on the Internet I made my way to the the first place that offered something other than ubiquitous "doubt means don't". And that's what I wanted to hear. I knew that I wanted to be with my partner, and that whatever I was experiencing couldn't be true. I wanted to fight for what we had, despite a strong urge to protect myself and run away. I immediately purchased the e-course and then set up sessions with Sheryl and began a few months of really intensive work.

3. Were these issues that you struggled with before? In other words, what was your experience with anxiety before the relationship anxiety took hold?

I struggled with OCD and intrusive thoughts about health and mental health many times in my life, but never really classified myself as anxious. In the beginning of our relationship with my now wife, I had a big bout of anxiety about my health, and about my personality being able to be a good partner/father/husband, but those had faded a bit towards our engagement time. Until the e-course, I didn't realize that I had anxiety, or that's what it was called, and I definitely didn't know that I was a "sensitive person". Once I learned that in the first few lessons, the larger picture of myself started to form and things that I had experienced all my life started to make sense. Coming from a high-stress, fast-paced corporate world, and fairly cool and strict upbringing, being scared of anything and failing was not acceptable, so after years of repressing those feelings I had a lot of anxiety built up that is taking time to undo. There are a few good lessons in the e-course that deal with that, specifically the first lesson and lessons on managing anxiety.

Specific to relationship anxiety, I had experienced it once before, in my first ever relationship. As soon as it became "secure", I felt something utterly weird (what you

will call projection, and transition) and being a completely ignorant young man, guided by other ignorant young men, I ran from that relationship, having believed the projections and fears meant that I simply “fell out of love” and it was time to move on. I came back to those memories many times during my engagement anxiety and my work through the e-course.

4. How did the e-course help you? What was the most helpful part of the ecourse? Another way to answer this question is to describe your main insights/realizations and how they've helped you along your healing journey.

The e-course was very helpful. It really is key to go through the exercises, daily, hourly if you have to. Some of the most valuable lessons were the lesson on Projections and “being annoyed” at your partner, and the lesson on real love versus infatuation. I think these are really important lessons, not only for relationships and rough patches, but generally in life and in long-term relationships. Learning that your feelings of unhappiness with whatever topic in life are your own responsibility and not blaming them on those close to you was an eye-opening experience. And even if you don't think you do that, everyone experiences projection and I've witnessed a profound change in my thinking and ways to look at life. We as a society are really poor at taking responsibility for making ourselves happy, and we gladly shift it on others, our partners, our families, and think that “well, if only I could change that” or “if only she/he was a better at this/that” then I would be happy. So learning to step up and realize that in every situation there's a good portion that is your own responsibility was and is an ongoing profound lesson. The lesson on recognizing real love versus infatuation is incredible. You can listen and go through it a dozen times and each one you'll learn something new. I've gone over it a few times during different stages of my own work, and it has provided good back-up for the times when you're not feeling all that “in love”. As well, throughout the e-course there were a lot of examples, interviews and lessons from other people provided as part of the e-course, and those are extremely helpful. Even just knowing that you're not alone that experiences this will alleviate a lot of anxiety. Others have gone through this and made it work, so you know you can as well.

Throughout the course, Sheryl teaches several tools for managing anxiety, and when I learned the dialogue process it started to change my life. Dialoguing is a tool that's really good at getting to the deeper layers of your own mind and it's really good at identifying the underlying issues. There's a lot of work that you have to do even with the tool and it's not a “pill” for anxiety, but once you practice using it a few times, it's very helpful. What I truly like about it is that it's not a meditation, or a religious tool, although there's a bit of spirituality and higher guidance as part of it, but you can be anyone to use it, and to be able to apply in your situations. I use it frequently now, not only for relationship anxiety, but also for more everyday things in life. It's something that's really good to keep you grounded at times when it's hard to find structure in life.

5. Men are sometimes reluctant to sign up for the ecourse because some of the language on my site and earlier work is more geared toward women. What would you say to a guy who's struggling with relationship anxiety but on the fence about purchasing the course because he's concerned that the material won't apply to him?

The course material applies no matter who you are. As a man, this topic, anxiety, fears, feelings are hard to speak about and it's very hard to breach that built up barrier. I think women are more accepting of feelings and concerns and external help, and for men, it's harder to find this kind of support, and it's even harder to accept it once you find it. All I can say is that I had to come to the last resort to try this, to speak to someone about what I was going through, to go through the e-course. It's much more socially normal for men to try to "shrug it off", walk away, blame someone else, but if you're reading this, I am sure that this is not what you want to do this time. And this course can help. It will not tell you to walk away or that you're making a mistake.

The following is a thread started by Leo on the e-course forum that reveals the depths he's willing to go to uncover the root causes of his anxiety and projections. As you can see, he's still working through his projections, but he approaches his anxiety from a place of consciousness and responsibility, which allow him to move through the anxiety and find his inner peace and his love for his wife.

End of fantasies - confessional?

November 7, 2012 6:55 pm

Member Forum Posts: 22

Member Since: May 31, 2012

Continuing on the path of work through all of this, this is the metaphor that has been on my mind for days, so I really want to voice...or type it out.

After months of struggling through the dark...DARK forest of anxiety, I came to the clearing. In the clearing I could see through the projections and the wild anxious fear to the truth that I am making a loving and good choice. I was on the shore of the river of change, and there on the banks of that river, I made the best choice of my life and married my fiancé. It has been both amazing and enlightening in that scary, life-revealing way.

Now I feel like I am crossing that river of change into the next chapter of life, but it is hard. It is scary, and like I posted before, waves of fear, of the largeness of life and world keep hitting me.

Here's the confessional part. I finally understand what the e-course lesson on letting go of "fantasies" and of "all other options" mean. Maybe it's just the typical "fear of commitment" – but I always thought, "I would be different than the rest. I will never be anxious or fearful of life. I don't need rest. I will meet the supermodel scientist artist partner and that our life will always be perfect, unlike all the gray mundane and hard life I saw around me. We will never fight, and we'll have amazing 100% all the time attraction. we'll catch it on top of the ebb and never let go." Realistic, right? I had a lot of fantasies that helped me through some hard years and into my 20's. And then when the real world started to break them apart, I began to "run from myself" about 5 years ago. I began to keep so busy and to keep life "ebbing good", that when I met my partner-to-be, I was an anxiety, ocd-ridden wreck. Any time I would try to relax, I get an anxiety attack. I wish I gained this understanding before, but better now than never!

These fears, and these fantasies, and the really unrealistic expectations and ideations about life need to stay on this side of the river. I feel like I need to cross that river and gain a better understanding of life and my new role, phase of life. To embrace the commitment, and responsibility, to learn what true love really means.

But, it's not easy. After the wedding was done, all of a sudden, the projection hit again – but I knew how to deal with it this time. Then irritations and such hit – again I was able to undo them. And I found a lot of sadness under it. So sad to have to become responsible. Scary to have a responsibility of a family now, to be fiscally responsible, to no longer have the need for the fantasy of that perfect *future* partner (I am very confident in my partner though and that I made the right choice), and all the other lives I cannot live. All the other things I cannot be. The liminal stage and sadness of growing up and choosing a life path has been pretty hefty. I almost feel existentially depressed. I SHOULD be happy now. I have a great career, I have a great partner, but I keep wanting the life to just pick up and keep me excited.

I am realizing that I'm really scared to take responsibility for my own feelings of excitement and life interest. I think this is why romantic infatuation is so addicting – it happens on it's own. you don't need to do anything, it just hits you and you ride the waves of euphoria. And why it's so anxiety provoking when it ends. It's like going off the drug and facing the at-times harsh reality – fulfillment comes from within, and no one can do it for you.

I recently reached out to Leo to ask how he was doing and if he would be willing to write an update for this Sampler. Here's his response (November 2017):

To update you on what things are like 5 years after, I must say that marriage is and has been great. More than great, really. It has grown and evolved beautifully, just as we did over time and through the challenges, victories, losses and changes of life. It's something that takes two people to nurture, but provides such infinite rewards.

In our short 5 years together, we experienced many happy days and our share of dark periods of despair, but what's important is that every morning I get to wake up to a person I love more and more. Love is indeed not just a feeling, but an action, a choice, and a decision, and it takes time to fully understand that. And this is what the e-course helped me do. This doesn't mean that occasional projection doesn't strike, but when it does, it is so much easier to disarm than I ever though possible, using well-practiced tools.

When I found the Conscious Weddings E-Course course, I knew right away that this was the approach and the tools I needed. And so I did the course, then another, and then a number of sessions with Sheryl, because I wanted to truly understand it. This work is not a one-time shot, and I don't think it's meant to be something you do for the rest of your life over and over, but it's almost like learning how to drive, or learning a new language. Once you invest yourself into learning it, it becomes a part of your life toolkit, and a part of who you are. Then it becomes simply a matter of

practicing it. It took concentrated effort at first, but after some practice it became an ongoing part of my self-care. It is almost like having an owner's manual for a sensitive mind.

The tools I learned helped me with many other highly stressful transitions: switching jobs, moving, buying a house, infertility and pregnancy loss, and providing care for my extended family. They also helped me to understand other people, to recognize other sensitive minds, some of whom like me once, don't understand or refuse to acknowledge their own sensitivity. I came into this work just wanting a quick fix to my projections and pre-wedding anxiety, but ended up learning so much and healing so much of my inner self. Breaking free from anxiety let me reconnect to my sensitive inner being, and to enjoy life, love, pursue my hobbies and interests instead of spending days ruminating and projecting. Doing this work has been one of the most important things I've done for myself.

GERARD

Please state your age and a bit of background about your relationship (how long you've been married; partner's age; number of children, etc). And if you've been on the forum please share your forum name.

I am Gerard from the forum. I am 40 years old have been with my wife since we were both 18. We had our only child pretty early in the relationship, who is now 22.

How soon into the relationship did your anxiety begin?

Around the time my son left home at 18. I started to obsess at first on the idea that I needed to leave and "sow my wild oats" or whatever the phrase might be - to have other sexual relationships that I missed out on by settling down so young.

What were your symptoms?

Panic attacks and ruminations - awful cycling thoughts and spikes of anxiety when attracted to other people or when I saw my wife in an unattractive light.

What was your main spike/hook?

Sometimes it was being attracted to other people but mostly it was the "magnifying glass" as Sheryl describes it - picking my wife's looks apart and fearing she was not the right "type". That she didn't fit an image I had in my mind as a child of who I would marry.

She is actually an objectively good looking woman but my anxiety caused me to distort her features and obsess on details rather than seeing her holistically. It's really an awful cycle as I knew I really loved her more than anything.

What was most helpful about the course in terms of working through these spikes? What tools or practices do you still use today on a daily basis or when anxiety takes hold?

I think "moving towards" was initially useful - rather than making the anxiety worse by giving it power I would just ignore it and initiate cuddling or sex.

I also found looking at what was going on for me - my own inner world really helpful in breaking the mental addiction. I have to say also that just knowing other people experienced this made it seem less horrible - and allowed me to realise the problem was in my taking my thoughts as truth rather than a sign I had to change something drastically.

I maintain a meditation practise daily now as well as regular physical exercise and some journaling.

Learning not to identify with thoughts or emotions is the work of a lifetime I think but so helpful.

Sometimes when I have spikes I return to the course work or Sheryl's blog.

How would you describe yourself and your relationship now?

Our relationship is so much stronger - we are closer than ever and more honest and open hearted with each other than ever. I feel our connection and love has deepened even if it's been a painful few years.

I feel our sex life and intimacy is better than it has ever been and we have even had periods of feeling like we had just fallen in love again which was lovely too.

I still have anxiety spikes but I have the tools to identify them and work thru them. For me I think of them like weather systems that are just passing by. I know they won't last.

I feel I am wiser and stronger for having faced this anxiety - after all anxiety has been with me since childhood and this latest manifestation was the one I could not run from or deal with in any other way but to face it.

I feel learning to work with my anxiety will serve me for the rest of my life - whatever it may hook onto.

What would you say to someone who's on the fence about purchasing the course and thinking things like, "I'm the worse case scenario" or "This work doesn't apply to me; I'm just in the wrong relationship" or "What if I do the work and I find out that my truth is that I'm with the wrong person?"

I understand those fears as I had them so bad I had to do the course twice! I would encourage them to do the course and do the work. It's very unlikely that they are in the wrong relationship or that any of their anxious thoughts are true and by doing the course they will learn how to see clearly past their anxiety rather than run from it. It will serve them no matter what happens in life or relationships so it's a win-win in my opinion to open up to this inner work.

What would you say to men, in particular, who are struggling with relationship anxiety?

I think men are less comfortable admitting they have these feelings and more prone to trying to hide them or bury them but if they have come so far as finding Sheryl's work I think they are the sort of guy who is strong enough and emotionally intelligent enough to do this work. It will benefit them on so many levels. There is nothing to fear in doing this work - and everything to gain.

Any last words of reassurance, comfort, or inspiration to offer?

Just that I feel life is an ongoing journey of discovery and an adventure - we cannot stop change or avoid transitions if we want to grow and fully experience life but we can learn to work thru them skillfully.

I have enjoyed such depth of connection and love in my relationship since fully engaging with this work and I am really happy I did it.