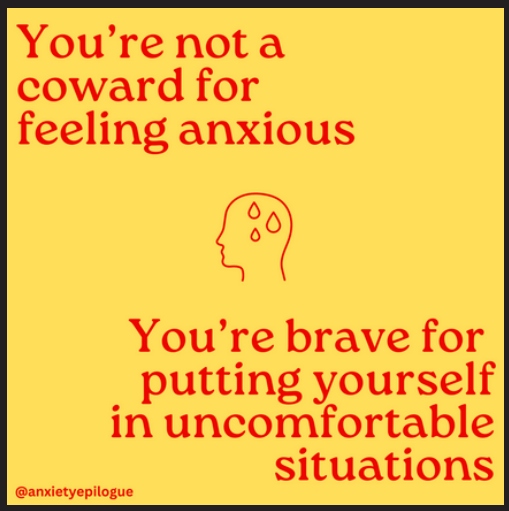

You've been fighting the intense feelings of anxiety and panic. And that is perfectly logical, after all, why wouldn't you push away these uncomfortable and even tortuous symptoms with all of your might?

The issue is that when you react as if you are actually in danger when anxiety strikes, you are reaffirming your nervous system's decision to initiate the flight or fight response.

The problem is that anxiety in non-dangerous situations is simply a liar, but when you react to it as if it were telling you the truth (aka: as if you were actually in danger) the fear cycle will continue.

You need to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. When anxiety strikes you may not be able to control your intense symptoms, but you can control your mindful reaction.

Tell yourself "Yes, this feels terrible, but I know I am not in danger so there is no need for me to react as if I am." This is the key to rewiring your brain and over time greatly diminishing if not eliminating your anxiety.

When confronted with anxiety, it's easy to immediately judge yourself with thoughts like "Why am I panicking over a situation so harmless? I'm so weak for having these symptoms. I'm so embarrassed that I'm struggling when everyone else feels normal."

However, you must understand that feeling fear or symptoms of fear does not make you a coward. Bravery means doing something despite your fear. Your fear is the very thing that makes you brave because feeling fear means you are in a situation that requires courage to surpass.

Think of anyone you would define as "brave." Why are they brave? Because they do scary things. If they had zero fear of doing these scary things, we would not consider them brave because their actions would be emotionless and as mechanical as a machine.

So, when you put yourself in a situation that brings on symptoms of anxiety do not think "I am so weak. I am a coward." Reframe your thought to: "I am strong for putting myself in a situation that I am uncomfortable in. I am brave for not avoiding this situation just because it brings on symptoms of anxiety."

Your bravery will pay off when these situations eventually lose the ability to provoke anxiety.

There is a secondary form of suffering that many with anxiety experience, which is the coinciding shame. Many, especially men, feel that because they experience anxiety, they will be seen as weak and lacking in masculinity. To feel such debilitating symptoms in seemingly innocuous situations can make one feel like a "defective" human. But the fact is that you do not need to let anxiety define you.

Life, though beautiful, is a difficult journey and no one makes it through without challenges and adversity. Your struggles are not your identity. The way you face them is.

Do not see anxiety or mental illness as a scarlet letter of weakness, instead see it as an opportunity to prove your strength by overcoming it.

No one feels shame for being sick or breaking a leg, so why should you feel shame for your challenge with mental health? Just like that sickness or broken bone, you take steps to recover and return to the life you love.

You have been faced with a problem, but since you are strong, you will accept it, find the path to fix it, and go to work. There is no use for shame when you are in a mode of self-improvement