

“Sometimes the hardest things in life are the things most worth doing. Just because we haven’t figured it out yet, doesn’t mean we won’t.” — *Rick Castle, Castle*

Hey, isn’t that quote from a guy on TV? Isn’t that from some character on a detective show? Yes. You got me.

You are correct, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t relevant. I think it is one of the best quotes that represents my struggle with fear and anxiety.

Maybe I am biased, because overcoming this changed my life in a way so profound that it is hard to put into words. I was really at the crossroads of either figuring this out or I was going to go off the cliff to a life of alcohol and drug addiction. I would not have been able to keep my job, nor would I be able to live the life I had up until that point.

You see I was an airline pilot and through a very strange set of circumstances, I became deathly afraid of being at high altitude and really thought my flying career was over. In fact, I was wondering if I was ever going to get on a plane again, even as a passenger.

And if that weren’t enough, I was also diagnosed with breast cancer. Being a guy, this was something I didn’t even know I could get, so I was not confident of anything at that point.

“Sometimes the hardest things in life are the things most worth doing.” I knew I could never return to my way of life if I didn’t get past this. So yes, it was worth doing and I knew it would be hard.

These two things were now on my “to do list” and I initially had really no idea how to take on either of them. But I think

I did one of the best things I could do and decided that failure was not an option and I was determined to get through this somehow.

Even though I had no clue what to do at that point, I knew that I would work to find a way and I would not give up. I was pretty afraid that I might not be able to do it, but I didn't let that stop me from trying. This was going to be a struggle but it was very much worth it for me.

Deciding to succeed was an important decision because getting over this took time and effort. I think one of the reasons this took a while is I had to build back my confidence. Even though I made progress, my subconscious mind had to record my victories and replay them back many times over.

I think this is a very important part of the process. I had to not only make a conscious decision to face my fear, but to make it last, I believe the subconscious mind had to believe it too, and that took time.

This is a very tough aspect of anxiety because it was easy to lose patience and get frustrated. I got frustrated numerous times. In fact, at first it was easy to believe that everybody else had the answer and you were all just keeping it from me.

Having now been through this process, I firmly believe this is solvable with a good attitude, time, persistence and some knowledge. In my case, I first found a good therapist who showed me how to meditate and got me down off of a very strong panic attack in about 20 minutes. It was at that point I knew the answer was out there.

“Just because we haven't figured it out yet doesn't mean we won't.” I hadn't figured it out yet but I truly believed I would succeed. In the following months I learned a lot of great strategies and concepts for anxiety, but I had to go through them and see what worked for me.

I went through the process and am free of cancer and am back at my old job. I appreciate every day and am so glad I committed to seeing this through. It is one of my proudest achievements, but is something I still work on every day.

Many ask, “How did you do it, what made the difference?” I tell them that I had great people to help me, I had support from family, I started to understand what was causing my problems, but mostly, I decided to succeed. From that decision, I gained the resolve I needed to work through it.

The decision to succeed is what got me to face my fears and learn not to be afraid of fear. Soon, small victories started adding up to greater and greater confidence. Even though I had days where I felt I was going backwards, I didn't give up and I actually started feeling like I was winning.

When I was a kid we had some pretty bad dry periods growing up on the farm. Instead of complaining about the lack of rain, my dad would just say, “Every day that goes by just brings us one day closer to a good rain.”

In the middle of anxiety it sure didn't feel like it would rain again. Ever. But it did, the struggle was hard, and it was worth it.