



Square One

I couldn't believe I was back in this same place again

By Shaindy Gottlieb

I fought it, trying to convince my husband that I did not need it. He held firm and didn't let me give in to my shame-filled, skewed rationale.

Did you get the medication???

The text is from my husband, his urgency expressed by the three question marks.

His timing is perfect because it's just minutes after the pharmacy delivered it.

I hold the small amber-colored vial in my hand, feeling equally relieved and embarrassed. *Lexapro, 10 MG. To be taken once daily.*

I can't believe I'm back here, in this same humbling and humiliating place. I thought I was done with this. But once again, I'm turning to these tiny white tablets, seeking help for the anxiety that has taken over my life. I sigh deeply, hesitating, not wanting to open it.

Ping! Another text from my husband.

How are you feeling? I'm worried about you. Did you get the medication?

He's asking again.

Desperate.

I don't blame him. I've kept him up for a month now, sobbing nightly into my pillow.

Got them. So embarrassed. I can't believe I'm such a failure.

Here we go again. Same script, same actors, different time period.

I don't blame you for feeling this way. But you aren't a failure. You're just human. Do you remember how much better you felt last time you took them?

He's been repeating the same mantra for two weeks now. But he's not wrong.

Six years ago, I was at a similar crossroads. We were tested by a painful family crisis. I thought I was so brave and strong and had gotten through it with shining colors. I didn't realize the toll it had taken on me, draining me mentally, physically and spiritually. It

doona™

Midnight Edition



mynt.

DID YOU KNOW...

...THE MIDNIGHT DOONA COMES WITH A MATCHING ESSENTIALS BAG



TWINKLE

☎ 845.517.0215

401 W RT 59, MONSEY (ATRIUM PLAZA)
SHOPTWINKLEBABY.COM



FREE DELIVERY

PRICE MATCH GUARANTEE



wasn't until the saga was over a year later that I finally fell apart.

I was plagued by anxiety, overwhelmed by relentless worry and obsessive thoughts, and my husband gently coaxed me to seek help. I attempted therapy, but I was too tired and too broken to do the work. So I was prescribed medication, an SSRI—Lexapro, 10 mg. A mild and popular option, it minimizes the nervous chatter in the brain. I fought it, trying to convince my husband that I did *not* need it. He held firm and didn't let me give in to my shame-filled, skewed rationale.

I started it, reluctantly. It didn't take long to admit that it was a game-changer. After a few weeks I was sleeping again and obsessing less, and I had the strength to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. For six months, I went willingly to weekly sessions with an empathetic and brilliant therapist. I gained a toolbox filled with skills and techniques, and more importantly, a realization that I had struggled and managed to cope quietly for many years with a general anxiety disorder, thanks to both nature and nurture.

The phone chirps again. I look at the screen.

Take your time but text me after you take it. I promise you, you won't regret it. How you feel now is not who you are. I know the real you. You deserve to feel better."

My perpetual cheerleader.

After being on the medication for three years, feeling normal and possibly even better than I ever had, I had decided to wean myself off. I hadn't exactly consulted with anyone,

●
after
being on the
medication for
three years,
feeling better
than i ever
had, i had
decided to
wean myself
off.
●

and I didn't share it with him. I felt good and powerful; I had a handle on my strengths and limitations. I was proud that I had taken medication when I needed to, and even prouder that I didn't need it anymore.

Life was its usual dramatic mess, but I was the captain of my ship, sailing confidently, with tools and tips that I had gained from my past experience. Until the perfect storm hit, a combination of unexpected circumstances—a bad case of COVID that left me weak, a child struggling with a learning disability, two big *simchos* with my married kids, a parent falling and becoming dependent. I was a perfect representative of the sandwich generation.

Worry and anxiety began creeping in, chewing at my already fraying nerves, familiar and unsettling,

culminating in two epic panic attacks that left me very, very scared and very aware that I needed intervention. Admitting to my husband that I had been off the medication for a year sealed the deal. All I needed was to see his stunned face, filled with overwhelming sadness for me. That afternoon I called my psychiatrist again.

And here we were again.

I'm opening the bottle now, I text him, knowing it will make him happy.

I see three smiley-face emojis on the screen.

You're so brave and I'm so proud. I know this is hard.

I shake the tablet into the palm of my hand, pop it into my mouth and swallow it. I know the process. It's not going to be easy. It will take at least two weeks for the medication to kick in, so I need to be patient. I say a quick *tefillah* to Hashem, asking that this be the right *shaliach* and thanking Him for the *chochmah* He has given to scientists and pharmacists. Most of all, I thank Him for a partner who has been a supportive and consistent cheering squad through all my ups and downs.

I took it. Thank you.

Amazing!!! You are the best!! So so proud. I promise you'll feel better sooner than you think. Will be home for supper at 7:30. It's Tuesday. Are we having meatballs?

I tuck the vial into my sock drawer, take a deep breath, and text back.

Of course! But promise me one thing. Am I ever going to be normal again?

A short pause before a beautiful confirmation.

You already are. ●

FULL
PAGE