

## Julie's Story

My name is Julie and I met Rachel Rolfes 2 years ago at a Bible study. We began to talk discussing what each of us did career wise. That is when I found out that Rachel specializes in stress management and helps individuals reduce stress while learning to manage it. I also learned her program was wellness-focused and developed over many years. She invited me to attend a seminar with her. I attended the seminar and we've maintained contact since.

### My Story:

In February of 2007, prior to my meeting Rachel, I began experiencing anxiety attacks. These attacks were fairly mild and easy to manage, however, by July they started becoming more frequent. Around Christmas in December of 2007 I experienced my first panic attack, which is significantly different than an anxiety attack. In January of 2007 I was diagnosed as having mild Graves Disease and by the fall of 2008 I was diagnosed as having panic disorder, combined with mild depression. I have been unable to really enjoy life or go anywhere since the panic began, and where I once enjoyed and embraced open space and loved to take it all in I have become completely terrified of it (agoraphobia).

Despite having seen doctors and psychologists throughout the previous 2 years to help me with my symptoms and "conditions," none of their attempts have been very effective, as I still suffer from panic attacks. Since much of my own personal research has suggested that depression is a leading cause of anxiety/panic disorders I decided to pay my general practitioner a visit in January of 2009. I expressed to him how tired I am of feeling like a prisoner and discussed the benefits of Zoloft, an anti-depressant. Initially he wanted me to try Lexapro but I was pretty determined to try Zoloft since two of my siblings have taken Zoloft with little to no side effects and "good" results (I'm not convinced it worked for either of them as my sister is now taking Wellbutrin and my brother has reverted back to his original state of being prior to Zoloft). Keep in mind these drugs are "supposed" to help you resume back to a state of normal. My sister has been on various "anti"-depressant drugs.

My general practitioner started me on 50mg of Zoloft, and advised me to take a few tablets and break them in half so I would actually be taking 25mg to get it into my system, and because I am sensitive to medications and have medication induced anxiety. He told me to take 25mg for 6 days. I decided to take 25mg for 14 days because I was sleeping better, and not feeling so hostile and irritable. However, my panic was still present. I knew I was supposed to have increased my dose 8 days prior but was very reluctant to do so, and nervous about it. After talking with my sister, she encouraged me that I would be fine. On January 24, 2009 I increased my Zoloft from 25mg to 50mg. I didn't experience any ill side effects and felt just fine. My follow-up appointment was on February 6th so I was waiting to see how the increase would benefit me. By the time I had my follow-up appointment I felt fine, except I was still experiencing panic attacks.

It was also around this time that Rachel called me one day at work to see how I was doing. We talked and I explained to her what was going on with me and how I was taking Zoloft and it didn't appear to be working for my panic. That's when she suggested perhaps there could be an underlying problem that wasn't being addressed. I expressed my interest in having her coach me and counsel me on alternative ways to remove the panic out of my life, since it was the predominate problem I was dealing with and the Zoloft didn't appear to be helping. Even more I didn't want to live off Xanax or any other type of benzodiazepine.

However, in the meantime I kept my follow-up appointment with my doctor, during which he decided to increase my Zoloft from 50mg to 100mg. I expressed concern at what I perceived to be a large increase and he advised me to take some of the 50mg tablets I had remaining

and break a couple in half and take 1.5 tablets, which would increase my dosage to 75mg and would be a gradual increase towards me taking 100mg. I felt ok on 75mg, but was still experiencing panic. On Valentines Day, 2009, I increased my Zoloft from 75mg to 100mg. That was also the day that Rachel and I had our first session by telephone. Most of my panic happens when I am driving or in a new social setting so having our sessions by telephone was a perfect solution. Our first session was primarily intake, however, Rachel did make some suggestions to me on a couple small dietary changes I could incorporate during the week before our next session and also she recommended some reading materials that would present an alternative view/understanding of what I was going through. One of the books Rachel recommended, that I purchased, is very inexpensive. As I began to read it, I felt as though the author was speaking directly to me. FINALLY, I felt like someone understood what I was failing to put into words, and that she gets it. After our session, I ran an errand. The trip went well and I was fine. However, on Sunday I needed to go out again but as I was driving on a very busy, main road, my body started shaking. I couldn't keep my hands on my steering wheel and I was struggling to keep my feet on the floor pedals. I thought I was having a seizure or a stroke right there in my car and decided I needed to pull off the roads and get out of traffic as quickly as possible in the event something happened. My entire body was shaking and I couldn't control it or make it stop. All I could do was pray, so I prayed until I was able to pull into an empty parking lot. I ended up canceling my shopping trip and I returned home. The Monday after that incident I left work early because I still wasn't feeling well. Keep in mind I increased my Zoloft on Saturday, February 14, 2009 and was now taking the 100mg dosage when this happened. I continued the dosage as directed Sunday and Monday February 15 and 16. On Thursday, February 19 I was at work when I started shaking again like I had experienced on Sunday. My body was tingling, my left side went numb, I had pins and needles in my hands and feet, I couldn't swallow, my vision was getting blurry, breathing was becoming difficult and I was terrified. I thought I was having a stroke at that very minute so I called my sister who came and picked me up and took me to the ER. At the ER they did an MRI, which revealed nothing abnormal or life threatening. I was told it was a panic attack aggravated by a migraine/tension headache. Whenever I questioned to any doctor if it could possibly be the Zoloft, all were quick to downplay it by saying, "no, it couldn't be the Zoloft." When I called my general practitioner he was quick to take me off Zoloft and prescribed me Lexapro to take instead. I decided to cease taking the Zoloft that day February 19, 2009 and work more with Rachel to find the underlying cause of what was REALLY going on with me and to find safer and alternative avenues of therapy and treatment. Rachel cautioned me (in our phone session two days later) that tapering off of any medication (depending on the length of time on them) is the advised protocol.

Today is March 13, 2009 and in the month that Rachel and I have been working together I have learned and discovered so many factors into what could be causing my panic, and we have only just begun this discovery. Rachel has truly been a God send to me. I am so grateful that the God of this universe had us meet 2 years ago because in 1 month she has helped me explore safe and effective alternatives to medicine, whereas, my doctors of conventional medicine haven't been able to figure it out in 2 years or have always resorted to an anti-depressant. Rachel has suggested safe remedies that have had a calming effect almost identical to what Xanax does, but minus the potential to become habit forming. In addition she has encouraged me with each step I have taken and has had to be the voice of reason in slowing me down when I become over zealous in wanting to try something new I just discovered or something new she brought to light. She puts so much of herself into your treatment and therapy and brings so much peace as well. Even in a simple voice mail peace just permeates through and reaches into the depths of your soul. It is so soothing and comforting, and while I know that her suggestions are playing a big role in helping remove panic from my life, I also know that Jesus is playing a role as is Rachel herself. I don't think

Rachel gives herself enough credit. She has had a profound impact on my own personal healing through her encouragement, her understanding, her patience, her knowledge and wisdom, and her peaceful and gentle nature... and it's only been 1 month, and we've barely begun. I look forward to exploring more with her what other factors are at play in my condition and what can be done holistically to reduce and remove them from my life. I recently developed allergies that turned into some type of upper respiratory condition. I don't know if it was an infection, but Rachel suggested a remedy I could try that would reduce my symptoms. It has been less than a week since I tried it. All I can say is that it worked better than any cough syrup I have ever tried whether over the counter or prescribed by my physician. It ceased my coughing at work and when I would retire for the evening, while unbeknownst to me, removing it in the process. Here it is less than a week later and my cough is gone. I would never have known about this remedy or that it even existed had it not been for Rachel.

Today it is April 21st two months from when I began my program. I am still doing well. I have now been free of Xanax with the exception of a one half-dosage use. I am also feeling more in control of my life again and hopeful for the future.

If you have an opportunity to have Rachel Rolfes work with you, I would strongly suggest that you jump on it, because she is absolutely A-M-A-Z-I-N-G!

May God's face always shine upon you Rachel and bless you for all that you do in His name and for all that you do to help others.

Julie