

# Riding the Anxiety Seesaw

Category: Feeling Anxious

written by Andrea Gordon | August 4, 2018

I have always worked to deadlines. Even in college, when I was passionately engaged in a subject like Shakespeare's plays, I was perversely proud of being able to write "A" papers by staying up all night. My cabinet still holds a paper upon which the professor wrote "I don't know how, Ms. Gordon, but it seems you have done it again."

It drives my husband crazy. He is a planner, has great self-discipline, a wide variety of interests and an awe-inspiring CV. He can have four projects and three articles in progress at once, tracking his progress on each, while I need to sprint to the finish-line of whichever is due next. If you need me to do something, be sure to tell me when you need it done.

Why is it so hard to just sit down with my hazelnut coffee, a lined pad and good pen or a computer and get to work? Why is the cat suddenly in need of attention? Why am I hungry? Why do the dishes in the sink abruptly become offensive?

In fact, I sat down just now to work on our wellness curriculum . . . and distracted myself by writing this.

It's not a lack of commitment or care. I think it's the balance of anxiety.

I sit on one end of a long seesaw, loaded with tasks, ideas, plans and fears. While the goal is to balance these, one looming job can shift the balance, and I swing up into the air, legs kicking uselessly. I shift and wriggle and try to move some smaller items, but like the little kid held up as the bully laughs, one foot on the end of the plank connecting us, I can't get any purchase.

However, as the deadline comes nearer, the project in question inches towards me. At a tipping point my anxiety over getting the job done suddenly outweighs the anxiety about doing it – and I come down with a "Thud!" Now my feet hit the earth, and I plunge into the work, all my contemplation and worry giving me a running start towards the finish.

It's not comfortable. But, so far, it's worked for me.

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