

# How The Freelance World Allowed me to Control My Anxiety



I sat around a round table, 'agency style,' when I finally expressed to my boss at the time that I had been struggling with anxiety at work. We sat there, wide-eyed, especially me, because I had never shared that with anyone. I don't think he was shocked, but he did say he wished I had shared this sooner, so together, we could create more alternatives for me.

I recall the day vividly. Everyone in the agency had been drafted into a meeting. Our meetings at this particular agency were very informal and almost family oriented, so I had no reason to worry. Might I also add, that was my second time working in an agency environment and so, the rush of deadlines and the fast paced environment triggered me in ways I didn't even understand, just yet.

Needless to say, the meeting had nothing to do with performance or lack thereof. But, I chose that moment after the meeting to sit one on one with my boss, where I expressed that the agency environment was giving me moments of panic and anxiety. I got into detail about what that felt like for me and then I concluded that that environment, in that moment of my life, was not for me. I had not even explored what that resolution in that moment meant until I had an opportunity to sit with myself long enough during... well, you guessed it, "the pandemic."

Covid-19 did more than shock the world, but it forced a lot of us to sit with ourselves. For me, it forced me to embrace my anxiety, my triggers, and ultimately why I chose the world of freelance. The freelance lifestyle saved my life, just as much as it changed my life. While in my research, I've never heard of anyone dying from an anxiety attack... from my experience, it sure feels like it sometimes. I'd honestly never wish the feeling on an enemy. And so, when I say that choosing the freelance way of life, saved my life, I mean that.



Maybe this stems further down into the nitty gritty of my personality type, which is very structured, unwavering and strict. I am also very organized and an avid planner, to say the least. Let's just say, I planned my whole 2020, from January to December and then cringed when I watched it all go to flames. This does not discredit how organized one has to be in the world of freelance, because this is really where my true planning skills come alive. However, I am able to gracefully plan, knowing that I have full control of my schedule, (minus the random mishaps), and I can choose my level of busyness based on how I feel weekly.

**2020**, the year where I saw everything for what it was, showed me that presence is far more important than productivity. Why? Because lack of presence equates to lack of wit and will, which then leads to lack of energy which ultimately leads to a poor job done. It defeats the purpose, really. So, instead of forcing myself to commit to working on a schedule designed for me, I chose to design my own schedule. One that works for me, and facilitates how I work.

There are two main things I've learnt about my anxiety and how it can affect the way I work. I cannot work with tight deadlines unless I was briefed in advance that this would have been the outcome. I've declined many projects because of this, because I like allocating my time well. Clarity and honesty about deadlines is key for me in the world of work, because I will panic and it will be more chaotic for me internally, than productive.

And the second thing, I think better between the hours of 9 am and 3 pm. Every other brain cell that chooses to function after that, is a bonus. (I'm obviously exaggerating, but you get the point) In my opinion, and what the world of freelance has taught me, is that there's MORE to life than work. And I want to see it all, live through it all and experience it all.

**In fact**, I'm a combination of all my experiences, especially the ones that teach me more about myself and how I can grow daily. And now that I'm a year and a half into being a freelance entrepreneur, I can say that while no day is perfect or free of anxious moments, I am better able to manage them. They say the first step to changing anything, is accepting it. It looks as if that day in the agency was a catalyst to my freelance lifestyle now. I can only be happy for that moment of vulnerability and look forward to what's to come.