



Kristina Story has been living with anxiety for more than 16 years. After turning to drugs and alcohol to cope with her symptoms, she moved to Detroit Lakes and got clean several years ago, and is feeling better than she has in years. A longtime musician, she plays the harp, piano, guitar, violin and flute, and also sings. Music is very therapeutic for her.

Marie Johnson / Tribune

'A CONSTANT COMPANION'

Anxiety is a daily reality for Kristina Story

By Marie Johnson

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Editor's note: This is the third in an eight-part series of weekly feature stories written in conjunction with the "Inside Out" community campaign to normalize mental illness.

Kristina Story had her first panic attack at the age of 21, in a movie theater.

It "came out of nowhere," she recalls, and she had no idea what was happening to her. Her body started shaking uncontrollably, her heart raced, and she had difficulty swallowing. She could hear her own heartbeat pounding

in her ears, and felt starved for oxygen.

"I was extremely frightened," she says. "I thought I was going to die."

That was 16 years ago, before anxiety disorders were talked about much in the public realm. The term "panic attack," Story says, "wasn't even in my vocabulary."

She went to the emergency room that night, but didn't get the answers she needed. Weeks and months went by, and the attacks kept coming, always out of the blue, and they kept getting stronger and scarier.

"It gets to the point where I wish I could just rip out of my own skin," she

says of her worst attacks. "Your brain is just continuously on a loop, telling you every worst-case scenario that could happen, even though there's no real danger. Your brain and your body feed off each other during a panic attack. It's a vicious cycle."

Eventually, someone she knew recognized her symptoms for what they were, and Story heard the word "anxiety" for the first time. That was a revelation for her. Ideally, that would have been a turning point for her, too, with her new awareness marking the

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People think that you're just a constant ball of fear when you have anxiety ... which is not the case. Those of us with anxiety are capable of having fun. We are capable of doing things — as a matter of fact, most of us are overachievers; we don't like to fail at anything.

KRISTINA STORY

Heavy snow load has property owners on edge, and another storm is on the way

By Nathan Bowe

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The Detroit Lakes area got hit with 13 to 16 inches of heavy, wet snow over the weekend, on top of 54 inches of snow through February, according to the National Weather Service in Grand Forks — leaving local homeowners and business managers wondering if they need to clear the snow off the roof.

The question was sharpened by partial roof collapses at a half-dozen businesses and a church in Fargo-Moorhead and Pertham.

And the roof of at least one home in Detroit Lakes partially collapsed from the heavy snow, along with a lean-to structure attached to a gym in the Frazee-Vergas Elementary School, among other structures, such as sheds and garages, said Jim Matter, of Farmers Insurance, James Matter Agency in Detroit Lakes.

"What we suggest, when the snow load becomes too much — about 15 inches on the roof — we suggest a roof rake or something to hopefully get about a third of the weight off," he said. Make sure to leave about three inches of snow on the roof to avoid damaging the shingles, he said.



Nathan Bowe/Tribune

Too much snow on the roof is a big concern this winter, though this Little Free Library on Minnesota Avenue seems to be holding up fine.

Removing most of the snow around the edge of the roof also helps prevent ice dams, which taken in total do a lot more damage each winter than collapsed roofs, he said.

Depending on how they were built, older structures, like homes built in the 1960, 1970s and 1980s, can sometimes be more vulnerable to snow loads, said Josh Lessman, owner

of Ledgestone, Inc., a construction contractor in Detroit Lakes. "They used to hand-frame the roofs, now we use engineered trusses," generally capable of bearing 40-50 pounds per square foot, he said.

Flat roofs can be especially vulnerable to heavy snow loads. "Flat roofs are tough," Lessman said.

And snow removal from flat roofs tends to be diffi-

cult, Matter said.

"With a flat roof, it's many, many hours — it's people up there shoveling it off," he said.

As if there wasn't enough snow already, another storm is on its way, with a mix of rain and snow expected Wednesday and Thursday and winds gusting up to 60 mph on

SNOW: Page A7

Jay Nelson shooting death:

Suspect given more time to prepare his defense

By Nathan Bowe

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The man accused of firing the shot that took the life of former Lake Park Police Chief Jay Nelson appeared at a hearing Monday in Becker County District Court.

Morris Silas Dodd Jr., 54, of rural Ogema faces one count of second-degree manslaughter and a second count of felony possession of a firearm.

His attorneys asked District Judge Jay Carlson for a continuance to give the defense more time to go through the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension report, the medical examiners report, search warrant documents and DNA evidence.

Becker County Attorney Brian McDonald objected to the delay "on behalf of the state and the victim's family," he said. DNA evidence was submitted in January and the state's final accounting of the evidence it intends to use at trial were turned over the defense in January, and no concerns have been raised by defense counsel, he said. "I just don't understand the need for additional delay," he said.

Citing the serious nature of the charges against him, Dodd's attorneys asked for an additional six weeks to prepare his defense.

Judge Carlson agreed that the case is serious and granted a 45-day continuance, with Dodd's next court appearance set for 1:30 p.m. April 15.

According to the criminal complaint, a call came in reporting a death in rural Becker County on Saturday, Nov. 10, just after 6 p.m.

SHOOTING: Page A7



Dodd

INSIDE New location

Thirty White gets hot news spot on Highway 10
Page A5



Their time to fly

Defending GA champion Thunderbirds advance to section semifinals
Page B1



Forecast

TODAY PM Rain High: 36 Low: 33	THURSDAY Snow Showers/ Wind High: 35 Low: 21	FRIDAY Mostly Cloudy High: 27 Low: 11	SATURDAY AM Clouds/ PM Sun High: 28 Low: 18	SUNDAY Mostly Cloudy High: 34 Low: 20
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Every day is a news day
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start of a healthy journey toward wellness.

But unfortunately, things got worse for Story — a lot worse — before they got better. Her real turning point didn't come until years later, when she found herself sobering up on the cold, concrete floor of a jail cell.

'Numb the pain and numb the terror'

Born and raised in Las Vegas, Story moved to Detroit Lakes about eight years ago to be near her mom and make a fresh start for herself. She had to get clean.

Her life had been spiraling out of control for a long time, and she says she knew it was going to take a "huge change" to push her off the destructive path of drug and alcohol abuse. A move to Minnesota, 1,500 miles away from the only home she had ever known, was nothing if not a "huge change."

Story's struggles with substance abuse stemmed from her efforts to cope with her anxiety. The first doctor she ever saw about her panic attacks wrote her a prescription for Xanax, a drug commonly used to treat anxiety disorders. She was prescribed a high dosage right off the bat, she says, and at first, the meds worked really well. But after awhile, their effect began to wane and her symptoms started to creep back in.

Wanting desperately to keep the anxiety at bay, she started taking more Xanax than what was prescribed. And then more, and more, and more. Until one day, she says, "I was taking enough Xanax, just to function, that would knock a normal person out for three days straight. And when that started not being enough, I found alcohol."

Story reached a point where she was drinking "a bottle and a half of wine at night, just to go to sleep," she says.

Illegal drugs came into the picture at about that same time.

"I was pretty much looking for any mind-altering substance that could alter... reality as I knew it, which was nothing but anxiety," she recalls. "I used cocaine for awhile, then meth.... I turned to drinking and drugs to numb the pain and numb the terror that was inside of me for several years. Then one night, Story got a wake-up call. She got caught drinking and driving in Vegas, was arrested, and put in jail. The episode opened her eyes to how bad things had gotten, and made her realize she wanted a better future for herself."

After an attempt to sober up on her own out in Vegas ended in a relapse, she decided

ANXIETY

► What is it?

Intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. These feelings interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to any actual danger and can last a long time. Examples of anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias and separation anxiety.

► Who does it affect?

Anyone, of any age. It's not fully understood what causes

anxiety, but inherited traits can be a factor, and traumatic life experiences appear to trigger anxiety disorders in people who are already prone to anxiety. In some cases, anxiety may be linked to an underlying health issue, such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disorders, chronic pain or thyroid problems.

► What are the signs and symptoms?

Nervousness, restlessness or tension; a sense of impending danger, panic or doom; weakness or tiredness; trouble concentrating; isolation;

gastrointestinal problems; an increased heart rate; rapid breathing; sweating; trembling; and trouble sleeping. In kids and adolescents, anxiety can cause irritability.

► How is it treated? Usually with a combination of psychotherapy and life changes, as well as anti-anxiety medications and/or anti-depressants, depending on the patient's needs and wishes. In the "Inside Out" video on anxiety, Dr. David Mach, a psychiatrist at Lake Region Healthcare, says 50 percent of mental health problems

are related to lifestyle. Thus, treatment focuses on building a good relationship between the mind and body. Cutting down on screen time, eating a healthier diet, getting more exercise and fresh air, and increasing mindfulness can all help.

► What can I do for a loved one with anxiety? Story says patience and communication "are two of the biggest things." There are times when a person with anxiety is going to be irrational, when they're going to feel very overwhelmed and frustrated,

and sometimes they might lash out. Be there to comfort them, to hold their hand, to tell them everything's OK. Or, if they say they want to be alone, give them their space, but let them know you're there if they need you. Encourage them to seek professional help. According to Dr. Mach, "You want to listen, and you want to normalize it, to not delegating — because it is very normal to be depressed and anxious." *Information compiled from the "Inside Out" video, as well as from Mayo Clinic.*

more drastic action was needed. That's when she moved to Minnesota.

'We don't like to fail'

Story refers to her anxiety as "a constant companion."

It's not present at every moment of every day, but rather lurks in the shadows, sometimes showing up at unexpected, even mundane times, like while she's watching TV. Like a fear-mongering little devil that sits on her shoulder, it shouts irrational "what if" questions and worst-case scenarios into her mind's ear, creating doubts, stirring up fears and producing feelings of panic.

That cruel voice is loudest when Story wakes up in the mornings, telling her she's "a failure," "useless," and "weak." It paints a grim picture of the day she has ahead of her and blows everything out of proportion with its extreme negativity. Getting out of bed is the hardest part of Story's day.

Over the years, she's learned that while her anxiety can be unpredictable, there are certain things that will almost inevitably make it worse: social situations where she's around a lot of people, for example, or life events that she can't control, like illnesses and deaths. Stress, lack of sleep, too much caffeine, and too much sugar also play big roles. She deals with depression and extreme fatigue as "side effects" of her anxiety, she says, and she has

phobias of flying, germs and crowded spaces.

She still has one or two panic attacks a month, but for the most part, Story feels like she's managing her anxiety as well as she possibly can. She's learned a few tricks to stave off attacks, like doing breathing exercises, listening to music, and reminding herself that she's in control. She has good days and bad days, she says, but her goal is to "make the good days more than the bad days," and she's been meeting that goal.

She's been through a lot of trial-and-error when it comes to her treatment options, but today, Story has found "a sense of balance" through a combination of talk therapy and anti-anxiety and anti-depression medications.

"People think that you're just a constant ball of fear when you have anxiety," she says. "They think that you're not together, or that you must just be an absolute nutcase, which is not the case. Those of us with anxiety are capable of having fun. We are capable of doing things — as a matter of fact, most of us are overachievers; we don't like to fail at anything,

There are times we can relax, we can have fun."

'I'm able to enjoy laughter'

Story's still not sure what spawned her first panic attack in that movie theatre all those years ago, but she has come to realize that signs of her anxiety were there all along. She was a "very fearful child," she says. She didn't like going to school, or to other kids' birthday parties.

"I kind of kept myself in a little safe shoebox," she recalls.

"I never dealt with bad things as they came along, I just kind of pushed them aside. Then one that day caught up with me, and it kind of exploded."

Knowing what she knows now, at age 37, she's speaking out about her experience with anxiety because, "there are so many people who don't get the proper help right away, and it can escalate into an absolute nightmare."

She wants to let people with anxiety know that it's OK to reach out and get help.

"Tell somebody — tell a doctor, tell a mom, tell a parent, tell a friend,

whoever, and make sure you're being listened to," she advises. "Once you have that gate of communication open with somebody you trust, there is always going to be a light at the end of the tunnel."

"It's nothing to be ashamed of," she adds. "Just remember that it takes a lot more bravery to walk a mile with anxiety than to not. You're braver than you think, because every day that you wake up and you push yourself through that day, that is a victory in itself. Every accomplishment is something to be proud of."

It wasn't always easy, but Story managed to turn her life around. She went back to school to become a certified nursing assistant, and now has a stable job, a home of her own, a solid support system in place, and has been sober for years.

"I still feel sadness and anxiety, and it's scary," she says. "But being sober means I'm able to enjoy laughter and happiness and experience life for what it really is, without mind-altering substances."

An avid musician, she also finds some solace in music, which she says can be "very therapeutic" for her. She's been playing the piano for 30 years, and the harp for 20. She also plays the violin, guitar and flute, and is a vocalist and songwriter. She's performed at local church

FACTS AND STATISTICS

► Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults, or 18.1 percent of the population.

► Anxiety disorders affect 25.1 percent of children between 13 and 18 years old. Untreated children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk of performing poorly in school, missing out on important social experiences, and engaging in substance abuse.

► Anxiety is as common among older adults as among the young, and is frequently associated with traumatic events such as a fall or acute illness.

► Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only 36.9 percent of those suffering receive treatment.

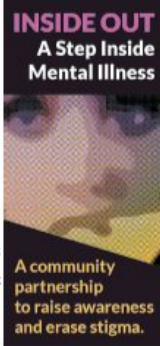
► It's not uncommon for someone with an anxiety disorder to also suffer from depression or vice versa. Nearly one-half of those diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

From the Anxiety and Depression Association of America

services and events like weddings and funerals.

"Anxiety is still a very prevalent issue for me," she says. "But I'm a lot better equipped to handle it at this point today than I ever was."

The third "Inside Out" video, featuring Kristina Story speaking about her experience with anxiety, is available to watch online at www.beckercountyenergize.com. More information about the "Inside Out" community campaign can be found with the online version of this story, at www.dl-online.com.



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