

Panic attacks case study

Suzanne Smith is a single mum of a 14-year-old girl, Jess. Last year Suzanne and Jess were at Leeds Bradford Airport getting ready to board a plane to Spain when Jess collapsed and was taken very ill. Suzanne started to feel very frightened as she waited for emergency help to arrive. Her heart started to race, her breathing got very fast and she felt very dizzy, nauseous and light-headed. A crowd formed around Jess who was lying on the floor in her mother's arms. Many faces were looking at them as Suzanne got more and more anxious. When help arrived, Jess was transported on a stretcher through the crowded airport.

After a couple of weeks in hospital Jess got better but her mum started to experience anxiety symptoms in crowded places. One busy Saturday afternoon in the supermarket she started to feel sweaty, hot and dizzy. Her heart was racing, and her breathing was very fast. She thought she was about to faint in front of lots of people. This made her anxiety symptoms worse and she had a panic attack. She had to leave the supermarket and sit in her car until the panic was over.

Since that day Suzanne has continued to have panic attacks at random times in public places such as on the bus on her way home from work. During her panic attacks Suzanne is frightened that she will faint although this has never happened. She has started to avoid going to the supermarket at busy times, for fear of having a panic attack and will only go late at night when it's very quiet. She will only travel on the bus now when with a friend and has stopped going into Leeds city centre. She has also started to carry a bottle of water and a stress remedy around with her at all times.

Suzanne and Jess want to go on holiday this year, but Suzanne is too scared to go back to Leeds Bradford Airport. She is frightened about having a panic attack in front of lots of people and is worried that, if she does, she wouldn't be able to take care of her daughter if she was taken ill again.