

Sarcoidosis and Panic Attacks

I get panic attacks when I'm starting to wake up in the morning. There is no particular scenario or nightmare, I simply suddenly experience a terrible sense of fear. Fear fills my mind and I can't get away from it. Alcohol makes it stop, but I want to stop using alcohol completely. I understand that people with sarcoidosis (mine is pulmonary sarcoidosis) have about three times the likelihood of experiencing panic attacks as "non-sarcs" do. I never experienced panic attacks before I developed sarc. I am 72 and was diagnosed about 6 years ago. My fear does not revolve around what might "happen" to me due to sarc. I think it revolves around fear of abandonment. My first 2 years of life I was pretty much an orphan. My mother had me out of wedlock and she was filled with shame, so she "hid" me. She found an old married couple out in the country and paid them to take care of me. Then every two or three weeks she would come and see me, on a Sunday afternoon (she didn't drive or have access to a car. She never could learn to drive, although she had a high IQ). She would see me for a couple of hours, which was a couple of hours of heaven for me. The couple who took care of me changed my diapers and fed me, but I remember a lot from those years and the people who took care of me did not hold me or give me physical affection. But my mom did! Every time when she left, I cried and reached out to hold her back so that she would not go away. Every time I had no idea whether she would come back, or when. Then when I was 2 years old she married my stepfather and had my baby sister. She was a respectable married lady and did not have to hide me any more, and I got to live with my parents and get nurtured. It was wonderful. But I have really severe abandonment issues and have spent a lot of time in therapy. Seeing a psychiatrist helped a lot. But there are still times when I feel the fear, the panic, that I experienced when I was with that older couple and did not get touched hardly at all. My feeling when I was with those caretakers was this: if I found out that my mother was never coming back, I would just curl up and die. And that is pretty much what I experience when the panic attacks hit. Even though I know, on a rational level, that I have a wonderful family, a husband and three grown children, and am not going to die, a triggering event that started my panic attacks occurred, about 6 years ago. And the fear would come and I couldn't get rid of it. Alcohol helps, it makes me go back to sleep. But I want to find a better way to make the fear go away. Then I read that sarcoidosis could affect people's brains. The panic attacks started about the same time that I found out that the reason I coughed so much was because I had sarc. People with sarc have about 3 times the incidence of panic attacks as non-sarcs, according to the reading I've done. So I wondered if other people with sarc had these experiences with fear, and could share those experiences with me. I will do anything to get better, except die. I'm not making a joke, suicide is not an option for me. I want to conquer this! Any thoughts on this would be very much appreciated.