

## Exploring Anxiety Disorder in '*I Wish You All the Best*' by Mason Deaver

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### *Abstract*

*The aim of this study entitled "Anxiety Disorder in I Wish You All the Best by Mason Deaver" is to describe the anxiety disorder of the main character in the novel I Wish You All the Best (2019) by Mason Deaver which has been analyzed based on a psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud (1936). Moreover, the data source in this research is the novel I Wish You All the Best (2019) by Mason Deaver. The research method used is a qualitative method that describes the description data and the data collection technique in this research is the documentation technique while the data analysis techniques used are data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. This study found a type of anxiety disorder, namely neurotic anxiety by several symptoms portrayed in the main character and how the main character deals with it.*

**Keywords:** *anxiety disorder, novel, psychoanalysis*

### **A. Introduction**

Anxiety disorder is a condition in which a person constantly experiences excessive anxiety, and this can worsen over time. Anxiety disorders can provoke symptoms that make it difficult to carry out daily activities. Anxiety disorder cases are not new since many people, especially teenagers who are growing up experience this stage of anxiety disorder. Sigmund Freud (1936, p. 69) argues that anxiety is an unpleasant condition that is effectively accompanied by bodily sensations that warn a person of impending danger. In his theory, Sigmund Freud stated that anxiety is an important variable in most theories about personality. Therefore, anxiety is a psychological condition or individual emotional form in the form of pressure, anxiety, and discomfort related to feeling threatened in the future that something bad will happen.

As an illustration, the singer Selena Gomez was diagnosed with anxiety and depression in 2018 and battled these conditions. According to The Blast, Gomez was taken to a treatment center in New York City for two weeks in January to cope with anxiety and despair due to transplant-related mental challenges and family problems. Selena concentrated on her therapy, eating wholesome meals prepared by an on-site chef, doing pilates, and practicing meditation (Selena Gomez completes a treatment

program for depression and anxiety, 2018) Selena Gomez has already taken time off to concentrate on her health. Gomez said in August 2016 that she was leaving the spotlight behind to "concentrate on preserving my health and happiness" after experiencing "anxiety, panic attacks, and despair" because of the lupus she had (Chiu, 2018).

*I Wish You All the Best* (2019), a young-adult novel by popular and award-winning author Mason Deaver, is one of the books that deal with anxiety problems. *I Wish You All the Best* (2019) was a best-seller, nominated for the Goodreads Choice Award, named one of Cosmopolitan's 100 best young adult books, and won Pink News' Best Young Adult Book award. *I Wish You All the Best* (2019) is about Ben, an 18-year-old teenager who realizes that their gender identity is non-binary, so the pronouns Ben uses are "them and their," not "he and him." Ben struggles with their anxiety disorder that is exacerbated by their parents' rejection. After experiencing some symptoms of anxiety, Ben decides to meet a therapist at their sister's suggestion and tried to handle their anxiety and managed to deal with it.

Based on that, the writer is interested in the problem depicted in the novel. In addition, the reason why the writer chose the *I Wish You All the Best* (2019) to be analyzed and researched in this study is that this novel reflects the many cases of anxiety disorders in teenagers caused by the people closest to them. This novel is written using the point of view of a teenager with anxiety disorders so that the writer can analyze how teenagers face crises such as anxiety disorders in their lives.

Sigmund Freud argues that anxiety is a distressing condition that comes with bodily symptoms that alert the individual to approaching danger. (Freud, 1936, p.69). According to Freud, anxiety may take many different forms. It has been said that anxiety acts as a signal to the ego about danger so that it can respond appropriately, such as by rejecting or avoiding it. Freud (2002, p. 431) asserts that a response to a threat combines two emotions: fear and protective action. In this way, one has a different means of avoiding painful things, both physically and psychologically. Freud divided the three types of anxiety main, namely realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. According to Freud (2002, p.431), Realistic anxiety is a perfectly sensible and normal emotional condition that arises in response to the impression of risk from the outside world. According to Freud, this fear stems from reality and is connected to reflex actions, which are a manifestation of the drive for self-preservation. The appearance of an object or circumstance that causes worry will depend on how much of the outside world a person is aware of. This implies that each person's level of anxiety regarding a real-world event varies and is not necessarily uniformly distributed across all situations or items. Neurotic anxiety is a delusion that causes the individual to fear punishment or consequences from parents or other authority figures (Freud, 202, p.431) For example, he has anxiety or fear, if he steals money, will get the same punishment as before what he did. Moral anxiety refers to the norms that exist in society. The sufferer thinks that doing something will violate the norms that have been applied. In the past, people have been punished for violating these norms, and if they do it again they are likely to be punished again. For example,

feelings of guilt and sin because they have been betrayed or the absence of their husband/family during pregnancy and childbirth.

Anxiety disorder is a psychological disorder that includes motor tension (vibrating, unable to sit still, unable to relax); hyperactivity (dizziness, fast heartbeat, and sweating); and deep hopes and thoughts (Laura, 2010, p.301). Compared to the anxiety that people might face daily, anxiety disorders are different. Uncontrollable, out of proportion to any potential threats, and causing the sufferer daily distress, this worry is out of control. According to Greenberger and Padesky (2004), there are four ways to understand anxiety disorders: through physical reactions, cognitive thought, behavior, and moods. Physical signs of worry can include flushed cheeks, sweaty palms, tense muscles, palpitations or rapid heartbeat, headache, and shortness of breath. The duration of the physical reaction depends on how long the situation lasts.

## **B. Method**

Data collection involves a thorough examination of "I Wish You All the Best" (2019) by Mason Deaver. The novel is scrutinized to identify instances and descriptions of anxiety disorder experienced by the protagonist, Ben. Key passages depicting Ben's internal struggles, behavioral patterns, and interactions with other characters are analyzed to elucidate the portrayal of anxiety and its impact on the narrative. The analysis of data involves a qualitative thematic analysis approach. Themes related to anxiety disorder, including its symptoms, triggers, coping mechanisms, and interpersonal dynamics, are identified through iterative reading and coding of the text. Patterns and nuances in the portrayal of anxiety within the novel are explored to gain deeper insights into the experiences of individuals living with anxiety disorder.

## **C. Findings and Discussion**

The first symptom that the main character experiences are shortness of breath. This symptom happens every time Ben faces their parents or thinks about their parents. It can be seen from the data below.

“Belgian. I think.” Mom and I spent a good amount of time tracing our last names. She was really into that genealogy sort of stuff, so when Hannah and Dad were having one of their huge arguments, she’d take me to the library, and we’d sit and read all the books they had about our family. After a few visits, we ran dry though, and just started finding names and making up backstories about them and what they were doing now. Then one day we sort of just stopped going.

Guess it wasn’t fun for her anymore. I stop walking, my heart twisting in my chest. (Deaver, 2019, p. 41)

According to the data excerpt above, it can be found that Ben had their heart twisting as soon as they thought about their parents. In the data above, Ben was

nostalgic about their moment with their family before Hannah left their house, after that, Ben feels triggered and their heart twisted in their chest. The presence of a twisting reaction in the chest can indicate a feeling of tightness and difficulty breathing that is felt by Ben. The physical reaction appears to be triggered by the anxiety disorder that Ben feels when they feel threatened every time they think about or meets their parents. The threat arises from the trauma of the previous punishment, where Ben saw their brother out of the house after an argument with their parents.

At first, I don't even notice I'm crying. Maybe it's because my face already feels raw from the wind outside, or because crying is something I'd been doing for nearly two hours straight before I made the phone call. My vision goes blurry as I start to cry again, staring at my naked feet. I try my best to wipe the tears away but the skin under my eyes stings so badly. (Deaver, 2019, p.14)

Through the data excerpt above, it was found that Ben cried after being kicked out by their parents. Excessive anxiety can make an individual feel uncomfortable and afraid of something that has not come or happened, then these feelings can generally cause physiological symptoms such as shaking, sweating, and increased heart rate, and psychological symptoms such as panic, tension, confusion, and unable to concentrate. What Ben does in the quote is cry, and that is a human way of releasing certain emotions such as pain and fear. In the data quoted above, Ben said that they cried for up to two hours, causing their vision to blur. This indicates an excessive fear that causes Ben to cry. Therefore, it can be concluded that through the data quoted above, Ben realized that they experienced excessive anxiety and fear through psychological symptoms such as crying.

I undress down to my boxers and pull back the sheets, crawling into the soft, unused bed. I toss and turn, but after a few minutes, it's obvious I'm not going to be sleeping tonight. Every time I close my eyes I see their faces. So vivid, right there in front of me, yelling. And when I open them, there's nothing but the dark loneliness of the bedroom. I reach over to the remote on the nightstand and flip through a few of the channels on the TV, my eyes settling on a rerun of *The Golden Girls*. (Deaver, 2019, p.19)

This narrative appears after Ben is picked up by Hannah and allowed to stay at Hannah's house. Even though they are in a safe place, every time Ben closes his eyes, they always see the faces of their parents and when their parents yell at them. According to the data excerpt above, Ben felt that what happened to them when they experienced rejection was clearly in their minds, and the voices of their father's screams could be heard clearly. That's why Ben needs something to distract them, in this case, Ben uses television to get rid of the frightening image of their parents. As a result, this demonstrates the cognitive symptoms of anxiety, which include persistently thinking about distracting thoughts due to his concern. Anxious people worry that they will not be able to handle a situation. These ideas may manifest as feelings of inadequacy, incapacity, unpreparedness, and other negative emotions.

“Breathe,” I tell myself out loud, and for a second I don’t recognize my voice. My heart pounding in my chest. “Just breathe. This is Hannah’s house, you live with her now.” I will my hands to unclench from around my sheets, but I can feel the sweat on the small of my back. I don’t remember what my dream was about, but Hannah was there, and Mom was. “Breathe.” (Deaver, 2019, p.47)

There is a physical anxiety reaction is also seen in this narrative. Physical reactions are reactions that occur when an individual experiences anxiety. These reactions include many things such as sweaty palms, tense muscles, pounding or pounding heart, dizziness, and shortness of breath. In this case, through the quote above it was found that Ben found it difficult to breathe and could not even recognize their voices. In addition, it was also found that other physical anxiety reactions were also marked by the patient experiencing excessive sweating at one time, this happened to Ben and was found in the narrative, “I can feel the sweat in the small of my back” (Deaver, 2019, p. 47). In the data above, it is stated that the physical reaction was triggered by a nightmare where Ben dreamed of Hannah and their mother. Thus, it can be considered that Ben experienced anxiety symptoms from this data.

“I think my parents are here,” I choke out. I can hear the crack in my voice. I don’t wait for their response, I just close the laptop and grab everything. I run back to the guest room, taking the steps so quickly that I almost fall at the top. I make sure to lock the door behind me. (Deaver, 2019, p.64)

Ben's anxiousness also causes them to endure abrupt mood changes. Calvin S. Hall lists the following as signs of anxiety: persistent concern, abrupt mood swings, perspiration, headaches, muscle tightness, and weakness. According to the quotation above, Ben was initially content and relishing his time alone without Hannah and Thomas. Then Ben phones Mariam to discuss their first few days at the new school. However, when they discover the car's headlights on in Hannah's driveway, Ben's mood quickly changes. Ben's initially happy mood changes to alert when they find out that the car's headlights are on, marked by the narration, “I make sure to lock the door behind me.” (Deaver, 2019, p. 64) and then turns to anxiety when they realize that the car parked in Hannah's driveway looks a lot like their father's car.

Every night that weekend, I dream about my parents. I wake up covered in sweat, the sheets tangled around my legs. I only remember Mom’s face and the frigidity of that night. Saturday night I manage to fall back asleep after a while. Sunday is a different story though. No matter how hard I try, my mind refuses to rest. So after an hour of wrestling with my sheets, I know it’s no use. I’ll be a zombie tomorrow morning at school. (Deaver, 2019, p.70)

Another symptom of anxiety disorder that appears in Ben is that they often wake up sweating profusely from dreaming of his parents. In addition, Ben also has

trouble sleeping. It can be seen from the narration, “Anxiety and depression are two of the key factors contributing to insomnia. Patients will usually experience.” (Deaver, 2019, p.70) Therefore, based on the data above, it can be concluded that Ben is experiencing symptoms of anxiety disorders and understands these as symptoms of anxiety disorders, so he plans to consult these symptoms to Dr. Taylor. It explains how Ben deals with an anxiety disorder by understanding and feeling the symptoms of anxiety and discussing them with Dr. Taylor so they could recover.

“I haven’t been sleeping.” This morning I woke up around two-thirty, and the night before that it was around three. It’s getting harder to keep my eyes open during the day now. I’ve even thought about faking being sick one day just so I could try to catch up. (Deaver, 2019, p.108)

Through the data above, it can be found that Ben has a sleep disorder with symptoms of difficulty sleeping. One of the psychological symptoms experienced by people with anxiety disorders is insomnia and nightmares. In the data above it is found that Ben told Dr. Taylor that they woke up in the early hours of the morning around two in the morning and three in the morning. That's why they feel exhausted going through their days. Therefore, to treat his sleep disorder, Ben took NyQuil, but the drug only worked for a few hours. This can be seen in Ben's dialogue with Dr. Taylor, “I've taken some NyQuil, but it only works for a few hours.” (Deaver, 2019, p.108) NyQuil is a medicine for the common cold that can be purchased even without a prescription. NyQuil contains antihistamines that can cause drowsiness. Therefore, in this data, it was found that one of the ways Ben deals with their anxiety disorder is to find the symptoms of sleep disorders and fix them by taking medication.

The type of anxiety that is portrayed in the novel *I Wish You All the Best* (2019) by Mason Deaver is neurotic anxiety. This anxiety has a basis in childhood events. In childhood, a person sometimes experiences punishment because of the fulfillment of an impulsive Id need. A person being punished is usually excessive in expressing his aggressive impulses. This anxiety develops because of the hope to satisfy certain Id impulses. Neurotic anxiety arises from the fear of being punished due to impulsive behavior dominated by the Id. The thing to note is that fear occurs not because of the fear of the instinct, but the fear of what will happen if the instinct is satisfied.

This type of fear arises due to id stimuli, such as the feelings experienced by a person when losing ideas, being nervous, and unable to control oneself, behavior, reason, and even thoughts, at that time a person experiences neurotic anxiety. Anxiety is often referred to as a person's nervous feeling when dealing with certain situations. This anxiety develops based on childhood experiences associated with punishment or threats from parents. When a person experiences neurotic anxiety, the person is afraid of virtual punishment (imaginary) from parents or other people who have virtual authority to satisfy instinctual urges. For example, he has anxiety or fear, if he steals money, will get the same punishment as before what he did.

I begged her not to say that, and then I started crying. But that must not have been enough. The door closed, and I wanted it to open back up. I wanted this to be some cruel joke on their part. One I could forgive them for later. I tried the knob, but it was locked, even the spare key they hid under this fake rock didn't work because they'd locked the deadbolt too. (Deaver, 2019, p. 15)

The excerpt above appears when Ben is kicked out by their father when Ben finally admits they are non-binary. Neurotic anxiety occurs as a symptom of anxiety stemming from Ben's fear of their parents. This is based on the punishment from their parents when Ben tries to be honest that they feel their gender identity is non-binary. Therefore, Ben is kicked out of the house for calling their-self non-binary. The rejection belongs their parents after Ben's confession made Ben afraid since they could not even explain their gender identity because of their parent's judgment. Judging from the quote above, physical reactions arise when Ben is kicked out of the house by their father, such as wanting to cry and cannot continue the sentence they want to say. In this narration, it is seen that Ben experiences fear after being expelled by their parents. The feeling of fear that arises when you find yourself in a state of danger that comes from outside is called neurotic anxiety.

According to this narration, "Everything is going to be okay, and this is most definitely the right thing to do. I know my parents, they know me, they deserve to know this thing about me as well." (Deaver, 2019, p. 10) Ben hopes to be accepted and understood by their family, but the fact that they were kicked out of the house by their father causes neurotic anxiety in Ben. Thus, even though Ben is saved by Hannah, their older sister, and Thomas, Hannah's husband. Ben's anxiety disorder continued even when Ben lived apart from their parents. Since that incident, Ben has become more introverted and afraid to reveal their true self to others.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Following the discussion in the previous chapter, it can be determined that the main character suffers from t anxiety disorders such as neurotic anxiety brought on by their family's punishment and trauma. Ben, the main character, suffers from an anxiety problem that has an effect on them and makes them fear social situations and lack confidence. The trauma the main character experienced as a result of their parents' treatment catalyzes the anxiety that manifests in this book; it causes actual anxiety. There is neurotic anxiety suffered by the primary character because their elder sister abandoned them in childhood. Both fears cause other types of worry, such as social anxiety. In this book, the form of anxiety that manifests itself most frequently is neurotic anxiety.

Furthermore, the way the main character deals with an anxiety disorder is, they recognize and understand the symptoms of anxiety disorder such as cognitive symptoms, physical symptoms, and behavioral symptoms were also found which were described by the main characters through their narration and dialogue. In addition,

several ways were found by the main character overcomes anxiety disorders that appeared in him such as seeing a psychiatrist, daring to socialize with friends at school, taking medicine, and writing a journal.

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