

DIRECTED BY
ANNELIESE LEE-REID

STARRING
KATARINA ZHU



BARELY BREATHING

PRESS KIT

FILM INFORMATION

FILM TITLE

Barely Breathing

LOG LINE

A terrifying and lonely deep-dive into the mind of a woman with anxiety.

CONTACT INFO

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TECHNICAL INFO

Run Time: 4 minutes

Exhibition Format: DVD, HD 1080p

Aspect Ratio - 16:9

Color

English Language



THE STORY

SYNOPSIS

Flickering in and out of the void, the unnamed main character descends into a state of anxiety. She does anything she can to stave off the triggering images of thoughts she'd rather forget, cracking her knuckles and her back. She finally succeeds with three power snaps of her fingers, and we're left in silence. But it all comes back, like the rumbling of an overwhelming oncoming storm that terrifies the main character to the point that she falls to the ground like lightning. The images become inescapable, appearing with an incredible speed until all she can think about is a way to end it all. Then it all disappears, and she is alone, vulnerable in this sudden moment of peace.

Everything will be okay... for now.



INTERESTING FACTS

- The film's cast, crew, and post-production team was comprised of over 75% women and nearly 50% people of color.
- The filming of "Barely Breathing" took place over a day and a half at the Todman Sound Stage in Manhattan.
- Due to the unusual nature of this project, the script was written in a spreadsheet format, separating each section of the screen into a difference narrative.
- The filming of "Barely Breathing" took place over a day and a half at the Todman Sound Stage in Manhattan.
- The film was originally meant as a five-screen video art piece, but was changed to be a single screen cinematic film in post-production.
- "Barely Breathing" was originally known as "Anxieties" but was changed in post-production to reflect the importance of breath to the film.
- This film is based on the director's experiences with anxiety/depression.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"Barely Breathing" was born out of the intense anxiety and depression that has plagued my life since high school. Due to the lack of conversation about the specifics of anxiety, I thought this was just something strange that I was experiencing, some weird Anneliese-ism that would eventually go away. Going into college, it became so difficult that I couldn't write papers because I couldn't stop cracking my knuckles and my chest hurt from breathing so deeply to calm myself. I began seeing a therapist after four years, and this time of self-reflection lent itself to the creation of this project.

To prepare for "Barely Breathing", I began a list of my symptoms and the specific situations in my life that caused them. It was very strange making that list. Some of it was very easy to write down, symptoms that I knew I had experienced and had already started to figure out how to deal with, but much of it was more difficult to write. Soon the list became almost a textbook of my life, and with all of the words laid out before me, I could begin to think about this project more from a creator's point of view, a director trying to bring a film to life.

At this point I began to work on the visual storytelling. Originally meant as a video art installation, the work was meant to be shown on a semicircle of vertical screens. The center three screens would show the main character and all of the symptoms of her anxiety, the elements of this mental illness that people actually see, but don't necessarily understand. The side screens would present the corresponding anxiety-triggering situations. While the main character would interact with the sides of the room, and be affected by them, the viewer would have to actually physically turn and look at the walls, showing that the world must consciously look deeper at the causes of anxiety in those around them. Taking place in the all-encompassing void of a studio space, the film portrays the beginning, middle, and end of an anxiety attack.

Due to the effect that sound can have on those experiencing anxiety, I was in constant contact with my sound designer, Keira Simmons, from the beginning of pre-production. Know as a soundscape designer, Keira was able to work with me to create the overall tone of the piece and assign means to every sound that can be heard, from the sudden knocks on doors to the quickening, anxiety-inducing hyperventilation. This sound design, in concert with the incredibly talented efforts of my editor, Emma Taubner, made this film great, and I found that the overwhelming effect it had on the viewer would be better experienced in a traditional cinematic format, while still honoring the multiple screens by creating a 16:9 triptych.

This film is meant to call attention to the lives of those who experience intense anxiety and depression, and how important it is to talk to others and reach out for help if needed. The entire process was incredibly healing for me, and I am very excited for others to gain insight into the lives of people like me.



BIOS

DIRECTOR'S BIO



Anneliese Lee-Reid

Raised in South Minneapolis, Anneliese Lee-Reid began her creative career in theater at the age of six, acting in various summer camp and school productions. In high school, her passion slowly turned towards directing, putting up various short plays and films. In 2014, she began working towards a BFA in Film and Television Production from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, from which she graduated in August 2018. Since her migration to New York, she has directed or worked on over thirty film and television productions, some of which have been accepted into major festivals around the United States. Her own short film, "Maminka", produced while studying abroad in the Czech Republic, was selected as a Forbes Under 30 Film Festival semi-finalist in 2017.

LEAD TALENT'S BIO



Katarina Zhu

Katarina Zhu is an actress based in New York City. She is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and has studied classical acting at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. Her previous credits include various student films and plays at NYU & SVA. Most recently, she wrote, acted, and co-directed a short of her own.



FULL CREDITS

CAST

Main Character - Katarina Zhu
Guy - Sushant Adlakha
Girl - Cecilia Hua
Crowd - Grace Bernardo

CREW

Written & Directed by Anneliese Lee-Reid
Producer: William Zhou
Director of Photography: Jenny Chan
Production Design: Elizabeth Crowl
Editor: Emma Taubner
Sound Design: Keira Simmons
1st Assistant Director: Diamante Selvaggia Messi
2nd Assistant Director: Laila Núñez
1st Assistant Camera: Amanda Lettieri
Gaffer: Justin Chen
Grip: Eli Kravetz
Art Assistant: Gwendolyn Kelly
Production Assistant: Emi Helfrich

