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Pain showcases battles with panic disorder

NEW YORK (AP) — Mysterious, overpowering blitzes of fear: In Kim Basinger's life, there have been so many.

But one stands out. The setting: her fourth-grade classroom at Alps Road Elementary in Athens, Ga.

"It's very quiet and kids are raising their hands. But the teacher called on me," she said.

"I stood up and I was shaking, and my mouth wouldn't move, and everybody stared at me, and I thought I was going to faint."

"I ran out of the classroom. It was horrible." Unbeknownst to her or anyone else, Basinger was gripped by something called panic disorder. She still is.

And however extraordinary her accomplishments as a star and Academy Award-winning actress, in one respect she remains all too common: She shares this affliction with as many as 28 million other Americans.

Basinger provides a compelling case history in a new HBO documentary, simply titled *Panic*.

Produced and directed by Eames Yates, whose credits include HBO's acclaimed *Dead Blue: Surviving Depression* of two years ago, *Panic* airs Friday at 8 p.m. EDT.

Besides Basinger, the film visits an unemployable model in Los Angeles who is plagued by intermittent dizziness, shortness of breath, crying and terror.

It travels with a successful mortgage banker from Syracuse, N.Y., as he attempts to escape his geographic comfort zone for the four-hour drive to see his ailing grandmother in New Jersey.

Another subject: Earl Campbell, the Heisman Trophy-winning running back at the University of Texas who later played with the Houston Oilers, then fell victim to panic disorder after his football career ended.

Thinking back to when he hid in a room with the shades drawn and even contemplated suicide, he said, "It wasn't any more of that tough stuff."

The film hears from experts who offer psychological and physiological theories and try to explain to nonsufferers what the affliction is like.

Dr. David Barlow, director of Boston University's Center for Anxiety & Research Disorders, asks people to imagine themselves subject to lightning striking us two or three times a day, without warning.

"What would happen, of course, is that you could think of nothing else except: When is the next time that I'm going to be hit by this lightning?" he said.

Basinger agreed. "There's a fear of fear, fear that fear will come."

Panic disorder can result in feelings of isolation, inadequacy, paralysis.

"I remember how lonely I felt, and how in need of help I was," Basinger said.

I don't know if I was more elated over winning or more in pain over knowing that I had to come back.

— Kim Basinger actress

The breaking point, she recounts in the film, came when as a rising young actress she had a full-blown panic attack in a health-food store.

She managed to get herself out to her car and drive home. She did not leave again for six months.

Then aid came from Dr. Ronald Doctor, a clinical psychologist also seen in the film.

"Dr. Doctor — he gave me a new start in this life," Basinger said. "I even had to learn how to drive again. It was quite a process, I'll tell you that."

The good news: Whether with drugs or a behavior-modification

program, panic disorder is treatable.

The bad news: Only one sufferer seeks help.

Today Basinger knows never be "cured." She said never be an easy task for her up in front of the public.

"I think I'm getting better, it's an inch-by-inch process," she laughed. "Not even a whole inch." She recalled the Academy Awards in March 1998, when she won the supporting actress for her performance in *Lethal Weapon 4*.

"I was just absolutely terrified," she said. "And I knew the next year, I had to be awarded out to the next winner." "I don't know if I was more elated over winning or more in pain over knowing that I had to come back!"

The irony is not lost on the terrified little girl from California who became an international celebrity.

"God only knows what came from, and that's the way she said. "Here I was, a kid school who never said a word then on the night of the Miss Pageant, I stood up in the auditorium and sang that song *My Fair Lady* — 'Wouldn't You Love Me?'"

Maybe it was her blend of solve and effective treatment has made life lovely for Basinger. *Panic* is a bracing look at her and others like her can succeed in spite of fear.

Brooks and Dunn reflect on success

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — As close as country music gets to a sure thing.

In 1997, presenter Tammy Wynette announced Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn as the best duo without bothering to pick the winner's card.

She was right. For seven consecutive years, the duo of Brooks & Dunn have won the award. And they are up for it when the 33rd annual Country Music Association Awards (CMA) broadcast live Sept. 22 on CBS.

"There've been times we've won duo of the year, we've sincerely been embarrassed," Dunn said, grinning at the problem of having so much success it seems unseemly sometimes. "It can be perceived as being a bit one-sided."

Since teaming up in 1991, the duo of Brooks & Dunn have sold more than 16 million albums. In 1996, they became the only duo in CMA history to win the top award for best entertainer.

Dunn, 46, from Corsicana, Texas, has one of the most powerful voices in Nashville and lead singer on the bulk of Brooks & Dunn hits. Brooks, from Shreveport, La., is the dynamic live performer.

For their new album *Rope*, longtime Brooks & Dunn collaborator Don Cook wrote the songs featuring Brooks. Dunn brought in Byron Gallimore (Tim McGraw, Jo Dee Messina) for his numbers.

That would seem to indicate the team drifting apart. Just the opposite, they said.

"That freedom, as much as it is ready to latch on to any of a rift with us, actually is a dynamic that keeps us together," Dunn said. "Because you express your individuality and come together and make the Brooks & Dunn record."

Another success strategy is writers who want to work with the duo are invited to join them instead of working in Nashville, which is the common practice.

"You spend all day sitting on those buses a lot of times, waiting for the show," Dunn said. "So you utilize that time? And if you get a co-writer out there as motivated a lot of times that'll help you get it done."

Brooks added: "Kids and all that stuff you need to pay attention to when you're home, it's hard to pay attention to it when you've got somebody over there trying to write a song with you."

One of their first hits was "Scoutin' Boogie," which became a country music line dance craze of the early 1990s. They are adept at ballads ("Neon Moon") especially good at cranking out aggressive rockers like "Hard Man" and "Rock My World (Country Girl)."

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