

Panic Attacks



Relax:

A useful and helpful approach to dealing with the experience of a panic attack is to learn to surrender rather than fight the feelings. Fighting panic will generally lead to more intense anxiety and discomfort. Allowing a panic attack to happen and pass is a key aspect when dealing with panic as this can help you calm yourself in the process. There are several tools you can use to help aid feeling more relaxed until the panic attack passes. The following strategies can be used in combination or alone.

- **Breathing** – When you become ‘panicked’ you are likely to be breathing short and shallow breaths. This can leave you deprived of normal oxygen intake levels and perhaps make you feel nauseous, lightheaded or more anxious. This can be offset by breathing in deeply with a particular emphasis on breathing out slowly and maintaining an extended out breath. Concentrate on emptying and refilling your lungs effectively.
- **Releasing Muscle Tension** – When suffering from a panic attack, your body may become tense and uncomfortable. To better aid yourself in calming down and relaxing, try to tense different muscle groups for a few seconds while inhaling at the same time. Then release your muscles and exhale respectively. Move through your entire body, starting from your feet, working right up to your facial muscles.
- **Mind Power** – A key component in fighting anxiety is mindfulness. When your mind is focused on avoiding anxiety you can begin to feel even more anxious making it harder to tolerate the discomfort. Picture yourself from the third person observing where feelings show up in the body and simply note what the sensations look like. Are they throbbing, aching, tingling, sharp, large, small, round, deep, shallow, moving or stationary? Become familiar with the sensations so that you do not need to get rid of them but rather can tolerate the sensations until they reduce in intensity.

Habits:

Changing daily habits can be very helpful. Try to add more exercise into your day and take out alcohol, nicotine and caffeine intake. Exercise can be helpful in releasing built up tension, and by removing harmful and mind altering substances you can help to reduce anxiety.

Positivity:

It is common for people who suffer from panic attacks to experience negative thoughts, especially when going through a panic attack. Saying or thinking things such as “I’m going to have a heart attack” or “I’m trapped and something bad is going to happen” does not help the situation. Thinking positively and telling yourself thoughts such as “I’m ok”, “It will stop” or “Nothing bad is going to happen” can be beneficial in changing the way you perceive your panic attacks.

Help:

When you are feeling anxious or are experiencing panic attacks, help is available to you. There is always someone who you can talk to that will help get you through your concerns. Help can be sought by speaking to a family member, friend, psychologist or doctor. Opening up can begin to take away the hold panic attacks may have on you and allow you to better manage your anxiety.

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