Guide to Panic Attacks

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timeforthriving.co.uk
timeforthriving@healthisone.co.uk
0330 202 0283

Panic Attacks

What is a panic attack?

A panic attack can be described as a sudden wave of intense fear or discomfort that can make you feel like something terrible is happening or about to happen, even when there is no real danger.

Sometimes the cause of panic is clear (e.g., triggered by a fear/phobia), and sometimes it can appear out of the blue without warning or an obvious cause. When this happens, we often call this a 'panic attack'.

Should I seek help for my panic attacks?

Whilst it is very common for the general population to feel anxious from time to time, panic attacks can have a severe impact on an individuals ability to carry out their day to day activities.

There are many causes and symptoms of panic attacks. It might be helpful to learn that you are not alone! Panic attacks are common, and there are various methods of support available to help you manage and overcome your symptoms!

It is important to know that learning to manage anxiety/panic takes time, as you need to find and practice strategies that work for you personally.

If you experience panic attacks regularly, it is worth seeking support from a professional (such as a counsellor) who can help you identify, explore and understand your triggers.

Panic Attacks

Symptoms

As panic attacks seem to appear suddenly and feel so intense, we might notice changes in how we behave/act, as well as how we think and feel. There are many symptoms of panic attacks, which are often different for everyone.

Some examples can be found below:

Physical Symptoms

- A racing or pounding heart
- Sweating or chills
- Feeling dizzy or light headed
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pains
- Nausea or stomach discomfort
- Feeling of losing control, going crazy or even dying

My Thoughts

- What is happening to me?
- Everyone is going to be thinking badly of me
- Something bad is going to happen/i'm not safe
- I'm not in control
- I'm scared, am I going to die?

My Behaviour

- Avoiding people, places or situations where i've panicked before
- Wanting to get out of the situation
- Withdrawing

Panic Attacks

Facts and Figures

- 37.1% of women and 29.9% of men reported high levels of anxiety, and other recent anxiety facts and statistics.

- More women report experiencing high levels of anxiety than men:
  - In 2022/23, an average of 37.1% of women and 29.9% of men reported high levels of anxiety
  - Compared to data from 2012 to 2015, this has increased significantly from 21.8% of women and 18.3% of men reporting high levels of anxiety

- 5.6% of people in the UK are estimated to have an anxiety disorder, higher than the 4.4% global average [12]

- Globally, only about 1 in 4 (27.6%) of people with an anxiety disorder receive any treatment

Younger people are more likely to have some form of anxiety:

- In 2021, those aged 16 to 29 years were most likely to have some form of anxiety (28% likely)
- This decreased steadily through the age groups, and the least likely group was those aged 70 and over (5% likely)

Panic Attacks

Top Tips to help manage a panic attack

1

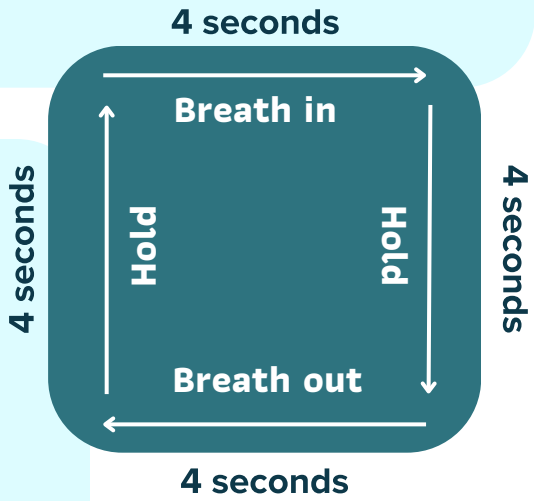
Recognise it's a panic attack

Remind yourself that panic attacks are not dangerous. They feel scary, but they always pass.

2

Control your breathing

Slow, deep breathing can signal hour body to calm down.



3

Ground yourself

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique identify...

- 5 things you can **see**
- 4 things you can **touch**
- 3 things you can **hear**
- 2 things you can **smell**
- 1 things you can **taste**

4

Move your body

Go for a short walk, stretch or find something like a stress ball to squeeze to help release build up adrenaline.

5

Self Care

Panic attacks can leave the body feeling very drained. Take care of your mind and body afterwards.

Panic Attacks

References

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