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Tips for Panic Attacks

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If you are suffering with panic attacks you will know how debilitating they are. Anyone who has experienced a panic attack will generally say that it is one of the most intensely frightening, upsetting and uncomfortable experiences of a person's life. Panic attacks can be as short as 1-5 minutes, whilst other times they may sometimes form a cyclic series of episodes, lasting for an extended period, sometimes hours.

Panic attacks are sudden, discrete periods of intense anxiety. They are often experienced in conjunction with anxiety disorders and other psychological conditions, although panic attacks are not always indicative of a mental disorder, nor are they uncommon. Panic Disorders are strikingly different from other types of anxiety disorders in that panic attacks are often sudden and unprovoked. They have also been found to run in families, and this may mean that inheritance genes plays a strong role in determining who will get it.

During the hyperventilation stage you might find you are experiencing some pretty scary symptoms and you could be heading towards a full-blown panic attack. The more experienced sufferers amongst you may be able to completely ride out a panic attack showing very little or even no obvious symptoms to those around them. Whilst others, notably first-time sufferers, may even call for emergency services. Many people who experience symptoms of a panic attack for the first time will fear they are having a heart attack, as the symptoms can seem very similar. Even health care professionals who have not seen one before can be mistaken.

So you have panic attacks but how can you help yourself? Well my 5 tips are:

1./ Your Breathing - During times of stress we neglect correct breathing. Around 60% of all panic attacks are associated with hyperventilation. Hyperventilation (over breathing) makes panic attacks worse. When you hyperventilate your body takes in too much oxygen, even though the sufferer believes they can't breathe. For the oxygen to work correctly in your body you need the correct mix of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Hyperventilation knocks the mix off balance. It has been common practice to advise people to take long deep breaths but this will only make you more anxious to relax you should inhale fully, staying relaxed, and then proceed without pausing to exhale slowly. Repeating as many times as possible. One of the other things panic attack sufferers have been taught is to breathe in and out of a paper bag. The idea behind this is that by breathing in and out of a paper bag you are inhaling more CO₂. It does work but not as quickly or as effectively as some doctors think.

While it is not harmful to hyperventilation sufferers, it hasn't actually been shown to help them either, what they do though is hurt sufferers of dangerous medical conditions that look like hyperventilation. Heart attacks and asthma can be commonly mistaken for hyperventilation.

2./ Posture - Posture affects breathing more than people think. As we get anxious and stressed we retreat into ourselves and almost start to physically curl up. It is totally a subconscious movement but its result is to compress the bodies internal organs. This means we take shallower breaths and the mix between CO₂ and oxygen changes. You need to work at keeping a correct posture, get friends and family to remind you and look at how you are sitting at work.

3./ Diversion methods -

Talk to someone to take your mind off your thoughts.

If a panic attack comes on through the night don't lie there thinking get up and do something, keep moving, eat, drink, watch TV.

Try not to sit down keep yourself active and walk around.

Tell yourself over and over that the panic attack can't hurt you and it will subside.

Try to do something that occupies your mind, sing out loud, add up and subtract in your mind, recite nursery rhymes, anything to keep your mind working.

Splash your face with cold water.

4./ Familiarise yourself with panic attack symptoms.

5./ Check your beliefs about panic attacks, to see if you are fueling your panic attacks unnecessarily.

Hopefully some of the tips above will help you in your quest to manage your panic attacks.

Rachel Harding is a qualified nurse. Do you want to be free of your panic attacks? Then go to [be panic attack free](#).

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