

When Panic Attacks

Empowered Living

Anxiety

Edition 1: Volume 1

When Panic Attacks



What is a panic attack?

During a panic attack a message of fear sends a signal to the adrenal glands that there is an emergency. This emergency response causes physical symptoms that many people misinterpret as a heart attack or other serious physical conditions. It takes only a few minutes for your body to be filled with adrenaline. As long as your adrenal glands keep getting an emergency message, they continue to produce and release additional adrenaline. Once your brain stops signaling an emergency, your adrenal glands hold the adrenaline instead of releasing it. The trick to stopping a panic attack is for your brain to stop sending emergency messages to your adrenal glands.

Stop a Panic Attack in 3 Minutes

It takes three minutes for your adrenal glands to fill your body with the adrenaline response. It also only takes three minutes for your body to stop the adrenaline reaction. If you stop a panic attack as soon as it starts, the reaction only has to last for three minutes.

Stopping a Panic Attack

Six Steps to Overcome a Panic Attack

1. **Act normal and stay put.**

Act normal despite the adrenalin flooding your body. Don't flee the situation (i.e. store, restaurant, party, etc.), or you will convince yourself the panic really is life-threatening. The more you avoid something, the bigger the fear builds. Stay in the situation until you calm down. Don't let the panic convince you that the situation is the problem. The panic is the problem.

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Psychological, Testing,
Consulting, and
Coaching Services

Clinical Director

Patti Johnson, Psy.D.
PSY23520



Licensed Clinical Team

Evelyn Lee, Psy.D.
Juliana Verksler, MFT

Interns

Kate Jefferson, M.A.
Rasha Sholey, M.A.

15300 Ventura Blvd. Ste 503-A
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
818-522-2941

drpjohnson@live.com

www.drpattijohnson.com

[twitter@drpattijohnson](https://twitter.com/drpattijohnson)

2. Recognize it's just panic.

Tell yourself that this is only a panic attack, it is uncomfortable, yet nothing serious is happening to you. You are not losing your mind. You can breathe. This is only adrenaline being pumped through the body, and it is not a threat. Fear is convincing, but it's only a feeling, and the feeling will pass.

3. Take calming breaths.

Take slow, deep, complete breaths through the nose to relax your body. Keep your chest still and let your abdomen expand with each inhalation of the breath. Slowly release the breath. You can also try stretching or holding your arms over your head, while remembering to keep breathing.

4. Use coping statements and stop catastrophic thinking.

Stop negative thinking by saying the word "Stop," inside your head. By firmly saying the word "stop" you are interrupting the emergency message that your brain is sending to your adrenal glands. Now, replace the negative thought with a positive coping statements such as:

- I have gotten through this before, and I can get through it again. It will eventually stop.
- This is uncomfortable, yet it is not dangerous. It will pass.
- This situation can be managed. I am fine, just fine.

Tip: Think of the kinds of fearful thoughts that bring on panic for you. Make a list of coping statements that you can use when you begin to feel panic. Rehearse your coping statements regularly, so you can recall them quickly if panic attacks.

5. Distract yourself.

Narrow your focus, and concentrate on something outside of yourself. Describe in detail objects around you by their; color and texture, purpose, and use. Keep talking and focusing on each object until the panic subsides. Try these other distraction techniques.

- Count backwards by 3 or 7 starting at 100.
- Recite the alphabet backwards.
- Recite the alphabet skipping every other letter.
- Play a concentration game on your phone.

6. Accept the feelings.

Don't resist the panic attack. This may seem counterintuitive, but what you resist persists. Let it flow through you, knowing it will come to an end. Panic is like a roller coaster. It goes up and comes down. As you learn to accept your feelings, and let them flow, you will become less scared of panic and more relaxed.



Study these steps and learn them in advance. Mentally rehearse each step on a regular basis. This will prepare you to manage panic at the onset of symptoms. If you do have a panic attack go directly to the first step and follow each step until you find relief.

If these steps don't work, despite your efforts, then seek help from a qualified therapist. A therapist can provide understanding about panic, explore underlying emotions or situations that might be triggering the attacks, and help empower you to stop panic attacks in only a few sessions.

This newsletter is intended to offer general information. Personal issues with a therapeutic content should be addressed with a professional clinician