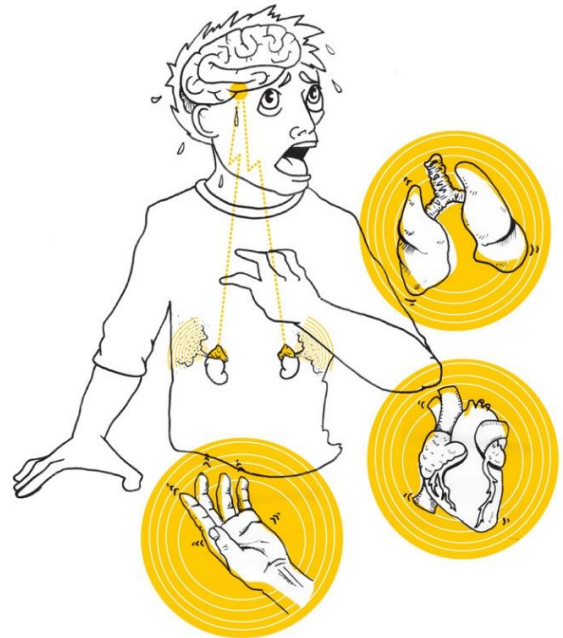


Panic Attack Disorder

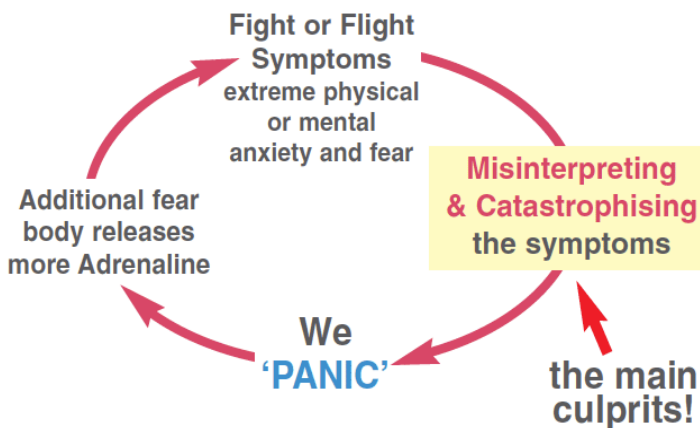
Panic attacks are sudden, unreasonable feelings of fear and anxiety that causes strong physical reactions in response to ordinary, nonthreatening situations. Symptoms include- chest pain, sweating, racing heart, and difficulty in breathing.

The facts about panic attacks:

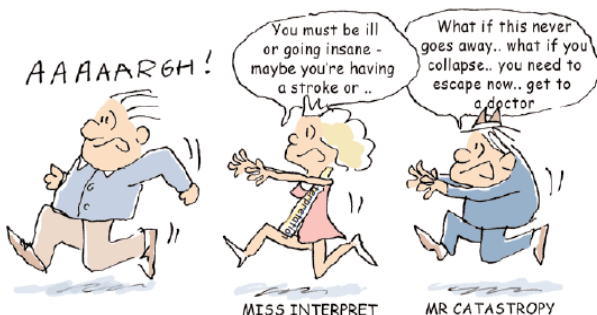
- **Fact 1:** Panic attacks are the body's "flight-freeze-fight" response kicking in. This response prepares our body to defend itself (for instance, our heart beats faster to pump blood to our muscles, so we have the energy to run away or fight off danger). However, sometimes our body reacts when there is no real danger.
- **Fact 2:** Panic attacks are harmless, although they can feel very uncomfortable or scary.
- **Fact 3:** Panic attacks are brief (typically lasting only 10 to 15 minutes), although they sometimes feel like they go on for a long time.



Realistic Thinking



It involves learning to identify scary thoughts that trigger and fuel physical feelings of panic. First, ask yourself what you fear will happen during a panic attack. Examples include: "I will pass out," "It will go on for a long time", "I will lose control over my mind", "I'll die." These thoughts tend to promote panic attacks and can be grouped into three categories.



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- 1. Overestimating:** This happens when we predict that dangerous things will happen in the future. We often imagine that something may happen, even when logically we know that it is not likely to happen. For example, when you believe that you will die as a result of a panic attack. This type of thinking is usually related to physical fears (such as fainting and hurting oneself, having a heart attack, going crazy or dying).



Challenging Overestimation:

Encourage yourself to think about scary thoughts as a question, not a fact. Then try to make a realistic assessment of how likely the negative event will happen.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. *How many times have you had this thought during a panic attack?*
2. *How many times has it actually happened?*
3. *Next time you have that thought, how likely is it that it will really happen?*

- 2. Catastrophizing:** This is when we imagine the worst possible thing is about to happen and we will be unable to cope. For example: “I’ll embarrass myself and everyone will laugh,” or “I’ll freak out and no one will help.” This type of thinking is often related to social concerns (such as embarrassing oneself).



Challenging catastrophizing:

Ask yourself to imagine the worst, and then figure out how to cope. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. *How bad is it really?*
2. *Is it just annoying or is it terrible?*
3. *Will it make a difference in your life a week or year from now?*
4. *What could you do to cope if it did happen?*

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3. Personalisation: This is when we take an outside event or situation and turn it into something about ourselves when it has nothing to do with us. For example: an illness among friends, neighbours or relatives/ news of heart attack or death, creating a fear that you might also get a heart attack or probably die like them. This causes frequent unnecessary doctor Visits/ Check-ups and engaging in frequent requests for medical tests and body scanning in order to identify serious or terminal illness. In some situations, avoiding going to the hospital altogether.



Challenging Personalisation:

Encourage yourself to think about your prediction and fear in more detail. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. *What is the evidence behind that thought?*
2. *How many panic attacks or heart attacks have I had in the past?*
3. *Have I gotten any medical tests to assess my current risk of having a heart attack? What have the doctors told me?*
4. *What's the most realistic scenario?*

Facing Fears

In Panic Attacks when you are fearful of something, you might tend to avoid the feared objects, activities or situations. Although this avoidance might help reduce feelings of fear in the short term, over the long term it can make the fear become even worse.



In order to help break the pattern of avoidance and fear, you must expose yourself to things you fear or avoid. Exposure can help weaken previously learned associations between feared objects, activities or situations and bad outcomes. This makes you capable of confronting your fears and manage the feelings of anxiety.

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If you feel afraid of common physical sensations, such as increased heart rate, heaviness in the head, chest pain shortness of breath, etc during heavy physical work, then you have to tell your mind that these kinds of physical sensations or feelings are normal and happens to everyone. These feelings are not dangerous. So there is no need to panic if these sensations occur.

2. Facing feared places or situations:

It is important for you to start entering situations that you have been avoiding due to fears of having panic attacks. Identify feared situations or places, such as going places alone, entering crowded stores, or riding the bus. Then, make a list of things in order from the least scary to the scariest. Starting with the situation that causes the least anxiety, encourage yourself to repeatedly enter that situation and remain there until your anxiety decreases/ subsides. Once you can enter that situation without experiencing much anxiety, you will gradually gain confidence that the situation was not as scary as you thought. In this way, get complete control over the situation by repeating the exposure so that these situation does not scare you in the future. After gaining confidence in a less scary situation like this, move on to the next item on the list. Tell yourself that you will experience anxiety when facing fears – this is normal. Gradually try to reach the most frightening situation. Keep pushing yourself by giving praise/ encouragement every time.



Fear Ladder Worksheet

Pick a situation that you commonly avoid due to anxiety and uncomfortable feelings. Write it down below next to #5 at the top of your ladder. Think of other smaller steps you can take to expose yourself to the fear you listed at the top of your ladder. Rate each step with the intensity of anxiety it would cause you to complete. Remember, you want each step to cause some level of anxiety. Once you decide to work on your ladder, you can start at the bottom and move up, or you can randomly pick any step and practice over and over.

Situations	Anxiety (0-10)
5.	
4.	
3.	
2.	
1.	




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Calm Deep Breathing

This is a strategy that you can use to calm down quickly. We tend to breathe faster when we are anxious. This can make us feel dizzy and lightheaded, which can make us even more anxious. Calm breathing involves taking slow, regular breaths through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. close their eyes and count to five with each inhale and exhale.



Talk to yourself and Share the Feeling

If you have had a panic attack in the past, convince yourself that you have overcome it in the past when you experience symptoms again. Panic attacks are not life-threatening, so why worry? Keep monitoring the panic attacks. Try Positive Affirmations that represent the control you want to have over yourself. Talk to yourself gently and positively for example- "I can control my anxiety.", "Nothing is wrong with me. I have anxiety, and that's okay." Talk to a friend or a family member about how you are feeling in the present, what kind of sensations you are experiencing the body. Talking to a loved ones can help subside these symptoms quickly.



Learning to manage anxiety takes efforts. If you are doing better, then you deserve lots of credit! In a way, learning to manage anxiety is like exercise – you need to practice your skills regularly. Make them a habit! Don't be discouraged if you find yourself reverting to old behaviours/ habits. This can happen during stressful times. That just means that you need to start practicing these exercises. Remember, coping with anxiety is a lifelong process.



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Learn from the Psychiatrist/ Psychologist and practice the following:

Facing feared body sensations

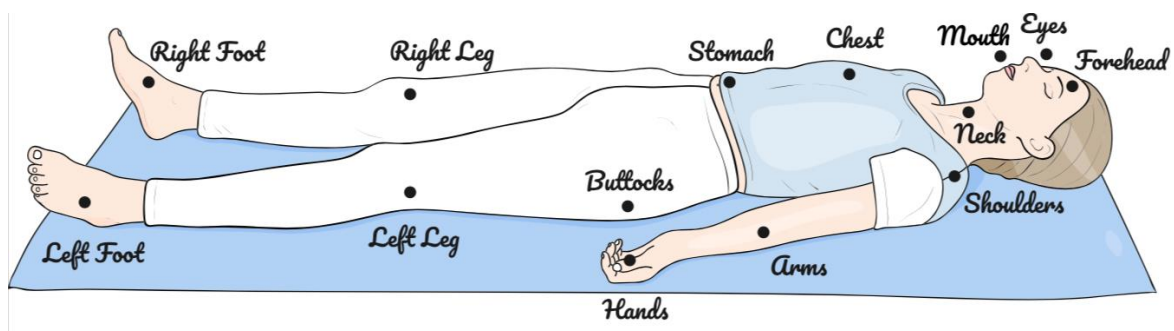
In order to overcome panic, you need to repeatedly bring on the sensations you fear, so that over time those sensations no longer make you anxious. This also gives you a chance to discover that your fears do not come true. Here's a list of exposure exercises you can try to trigger physical sensations.

- Running on the spot or up and down stairs for 30 – 60 seconds (racing heart, breathlessness, chest discomfort).
- Shaking head from side to side, or moving head around by drawing a circle with your nose for 30 seconds. Spinning around in place or spinning in a chair for 30 seconds (dizziness, nausea).
- Stare at your hand for two to three minutes (feelings of unreality).

Muscle Relaxation

Muscle relaxation basically involves tensing and releasing your muscles one muscle group at a time.

1. Feet: Curl your toes tightly into your feet, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
2. Calves: Point your feet, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
3. Thighs: Squeeze your thighs tightly together, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
4. Torso: Tighten the muscles of your abdomen, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
5. Back: Squeeze your shoulder blades together, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
6. Shoulders: Lift your shoulders up toward your ears and squeeze them together, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
7. Arms: Make fists and bend your arms, bringing your forearm toward your biceps and squeezing the muscles in the arms, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
8. Hands: Make tight fists by curling your fingers into your palms, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
9. Face: Scrunch your facial features and pull them toward the centre of your face, hold for 5 seconds, then release.
10. Full body: Tighten and squeeze all the muscles in your body together at the same time, hold for 5 seconds, then release.



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