

# WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT PANIC ATTACKS

## What's a panic attack?

A brief but intense period of overwhelming fear or anxiety. It can include physical symptoms that can cause people to fear they are having a heart attack, cannot breathe, or are dying.

### Symptoms can include:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Racing heart
- Sweating
- Shaking or trembling
- Fear of "going crazy"
- Breathing difficulties
- Nausea
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Fear of dying



## Quick facts about panic attacks

- Panic attacks may feel scary and uncomfortable, but they do not cause physical harm. The most common fears (having a heart attack or dying) are not actual threats.
- They may seem to occur randomly, or they may be linked to a specific source of anxiety.
- They are usually intense but brief. Symptoms typically peak within 10-30 minutes, though some may linger over an hour.
- *Panic disorder (PD)* can occur when a person has frequent attacks, experiences great worry or fear of future attacks, and changes their behavior in order to avoid having them.
- PD affects 2.7% of the US population. Women are twice as likely to experience it as men.
- PD is highly treatable with a variety of available therapies.

## I think I'm having a panic attack... what should I do?

Practice deep, abdominal breathing while you allow symptoms to pass. Breathe in for several counts and out for several counts. An app such as *Calm* (see reverse) can guide you.



Use positive coping statements. Some examples:

"This feeling isn't pleasant, but I know it's temporary."

"I'll just let my body do its thing. I can take the time I need in order to let go and relax."

Ground yourself in the present moment by using all of your senses: Take note of things you can see, hear, or touch.

Chew peppermint gum, take a drink of cool water, or sniff some lavender essential oil. Talk to a supportive person.



**SELF HELP RESOURCES ON THE BACK**



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*counseling.appstate.edu (828) 262-3180*

# SELF-HELP RESOURCES FOR PANIC ATTACKS

*The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*  
by Edmund J. Bourne\*

## BOOKS



*Don't Panic: Taking Control of Anxiety Attacks*  
by Reid Wilson\*

*Mastery of Your Anxiety and Panic*  
by Craske and Barlow\*

\*All books available through App State's Belk Library: [library.appstate.edu](http://library.appstate.edu)

For mindfulness and relaxation:

- Calm
- Breathe2Relax
- Headspace
- Insight Timer

## SMARTPHONE APPS



For mood-tracking and learning about anxiety:

- Sanvello
- MindShift

For coping and reducing self-harm:

- Calm Harm
- Virtual Hope Box

## ONLINE RESOURCES



*Anxiety and Depression Association of America:*  
[adaa.org](http://adaa.org)

*Selfcompassion.org:*  
Exercises and guided meditations

*Anxiety Disorders: Symptoms, Types, and Treatments:*  
[psychcentral.com/anxiety](http://psychcentral.com/anxiety)

*Washington Center for Cognitive Therapy: Panic Disorder:*  
[washingtoncenterforcognitivetherapy.com/problems-treated/panic-disorder/panic-disorder-organizations/](http://washingtoncenterforcognitivetherapy.com/problems-treated/panic-disorder/panic-disorder-organizations/)

## MORE IDEAS AND THERAPIST RECOMMENDATIONS



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This handout includes information from:

American Psychological Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

"The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook" by Edmund J. Bourne

[TherapistAid.com](http://TherapistAid.com)