

## **PANIC ATTACKS**

**“Love is what we were born with.  
Fear is what we learned here.”  
- Anonymous**

A panic attack is a feeling of overwhelming fear and terror that suddenly hits you without warning and for no apparent reason. Experiencing a panic attack is frightening since it can seem like you're having a heart attack, losing control or even dying! Though panic attacks usually peak in ten minutes, the consequences can be devastating. It can leave you in mortal fear of experiencing another panic episode.

### **Expert Speak**

Once dismissed as stress or a case of nerves, today panic attacks have thankfully been recognized as a real medical condition. Experts define panic attacks as ‘an intense recurring spasm of panic that starts... below the breastbone and seems to spread like a white hot flame... passing through the chest, up the spine, into the face, down the arms and even down into the groin to the tips of the toes.’ It can start with a tingling feeling that enters the head, leading to dizziness and nausea. Episodes of panic are sometimes accompanied by lightheadedness and a ‘sensation of fading out from the world’.

### **Seriously Speaking**

The duration of panic attacks can vary from half an hour to a few hours. On extremely rare occasions, they can go on for an entire day! Post panic attacks, sufferers tend to feel drained out and fatigued. These attacks need to be taken seriously since they can be debilitating and can drastically interfere with your life. Since they may occur just about anytime and anywhere, it can make a person under confident and withdrawn. Due to the disturbing symptoms of panic attacks, nearly 25% of people who end up in emergency rooms feel they're getting chest pain, whereas they're actually going through panic attacks. Consequently, sufferers often undergo extensive medical tests to rule out other problems before the condition is diagnosed as a panic attack. Medical

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practitioners usually reassure sufferers that 'it's nothing serious' or 'all in their head,' which can be misleading since it gives the incorrect impression that there's no real problem, so treatment is unnecessary. Though panic attacks need to be taken seriously, and dealt with, always keep in mind that they are not life or organ threatening, though they might seem so... The good news is, they can be controlled and treated.

### **Panic Disorder**

Some sufferers have a single panic attack, or maybe two, during their lifetime, while others get these attacks a lot more often. If panic attacks repeatedly occur, the condition is known as panic disorder. The worst thing about panic disorder is living in extreme fear of having another. This can lead to a variety of complications that make a person's life dysfunctional and unfulfilling. We'll go through these complications later.

**"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear."  
- HP Lovecraft**

### **Understanding Anxiety**

First, it's important that we understand the nature of anxiety. It is a state of fear due to an anticipation of a real or imagined threat/situation. If you've never been through a panic attack or extreme anxiety you might not be able to understand how terrifying the experience is. Since most people don't know what's happening to them when a panic attack strikes, they feel as if they've got a serious medical condition and are dying! It can also feel like they're losing control over their mind and going crazy! Suffering from any kind of disorder is scary, but struggling with an untreated disorder on a daily basis is unbearable and terrifying...

### **Anxiety Disorders**

There are five major anxiety disorders, but sufferers can experience symptoms of more than one disorder at the same time:

1. **Social Anxiety** is marked by fear, anxiety or panic in a social situation where people think that they might end up making a fool of themselves, thereby embarrassing themselves in front of others. So, they start avoiding that situation.

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2. **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** is the experience of an event or multiple events such as serious injury, threatened or actual death. It can also stem from witnessing a near and dear one go through these stressful events, that leaves a deep impact on one's mind. People with post traumatic stress disorder can go through panic attacks, though the major characteristic is reliving stressful events through dreams, flashbacks or even nightmares.
3. **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** is manifested by obsessive thoughts that makes a person repeat unwanted actions, which become daily rituals, such as constantly checking, counting, cleaning or repeating words to oneself.
4. **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)** is a persistent state of heightened anxiety or constant worry about things that may or may not happen. This disorder can carry on for six months or even longer with sufferers worrying about everything in their lives! Being stuck a constant state of generalized anxiety, can make them tense, agitated and irritable.
5. **Panic Disorder** is a severe anxiety disorder often characterized by panic attacks. Sufferers live in constant fear and anxiety of having a spontaneous panic attack that usually hits them without warning, anytime of the day, irrespective of what they're doing. Many sufferers get panic attacks when they're relatively relaxed, such as while reading or watching TV! People suffering from frequent panic attacks feel a lingering anxiety that lasts long after the episode of panic has passed. Episodes of panic are not random occurrences, but are rooted in an underlying general anxiety that serves as a breeding ground.

**“Panic is a sudden desertion of us,  
and a going over to the enemy of our imagination.”  
- Christian Nevell Bovee**

### **Identifying Panic Disorder**

If panic attacks are left untreated, they can develop into a panic disorder that can continue for months or years. It's important not to self-diagnose, but to get a therapist to make a diagnosis of this

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disorder. Though there are certain symptoms you can look out for, the main symptom is living in constant fear of future panic attacks. If you've suffered from four or more panic attacks and continually fear another one, you might want to go to a therapist specializing in panic disorder.

Panic disorders can lead to various complications such as depression, specific phobias, avoidance of social situations, problems at work/school, financial difficulties, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts or actions. Panic disorder sufferers are also predisposed to developing heart disease. Anxiety can worsen to the extent that a person's life gets seriously affected by these episodes of panic. As a matter of fact, while trying to hide or cope with panic, many sufferers have lost their family and friends, their jobs or flunked school. It's important to realize that panic disorder is neither a physical or mental illness. Nor are you dying or going crazy. It just seems so...

### **Face Facts**

- Approximately 2-6 million Americans experience panic disorder
- Symptoms usually start during late adolescence or one's 30's
- 78% people get a panic attack while they're quite calm
- 69% experience panic attacks while going to sleep
- 86% sufferers wake up from sleep during the night due to panic
- Women are twice as likely than men to develop panic disorder

### **Misleading Symptoms**

The symptoms of a panic attack can be confusing since often one has no clue why the body is reacting in such a strange manner. Keeping in mind that panic attack symptoms can mimic other serious illnesses, such as heart or thyroid problems, sufferers tend to worry that something worse is happening to them. During a panic attack, many of the symptoms are similar to what you feel after a good workout! Your heartbeat and bodily sensations increase, you sweat and breathe quickly. You don't fear these symptoms while exercising, so logically, you need not be scared of

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them while going through a panic attack! To find out more, you might like to read 'Panic Away', a former panic attack sufferer's e-book that is downloadable in 5 minutes from [www.panicaway.com](http://www.panicaway.com). Joe Berry learnt to overcome his panic when developed the 'One Move Technique' and is now teaching it to others. This 160 page e-book is loaded with information, including a sure shot method to get over panic attacks forever!

**"Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is."  
- German Proverb**

### **A Panic Attack feels like...**

Ever wondered what it feels like to experience a panic attack? Well, each person has different symptoms, but here's what it largely feels like. Imagine, as if you're suddenly not getting enough air... your chest constricts and you gasp for breath without trying to make a sound in case others around you get to know... a wave of panic goes through you and you're overcome by a feeling that you're losing it... you're terrified that there's something seriously wrong with you... you don't feel in control, it's as if you're 'not all there'... a part of you is present, but a part of you is absent, you're sort of disconnected... you know you're in danger and can feel the threat... This is THE END.

### **Common Symptoms of a Panic Attack:**

- Palpitations
- Accelerated heartbeat
- Sweating
- Weakness or dizziness
- Paresthesia
- Headache
- Dry mouth
- Diarrhea
- Neck, lower back or jaw pain
- Hyperventilation
- Frequent urination
- Unexplained rashes
- Muscle pain
- Sciatica
- Indigestion
- Pins & needles
- Fear of going insane
- Fear of embarrassment
- Tingling, numbness or prickliness
- Fear of losing control
- Feeling of terror or impending death
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Trembling or shaking
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing
- Sensation of an electric current

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- Choking sensation
- Nausea, vomiting or stomach cramps
- Lightheadedness or unsteadiness
- Feeling of unreality (Derealization)
- Feeling detached from body (Depersonalization)
- Chills or hot flushes
- Problem falling off to sleep
- Feeling of ants crawling
- Weakness in arm
- Extreme fatigue
- Loss of feelings or libido
- Short term memory loss
- Stationary objects seem to move
- Sensitivity to sound and light
- Fear of having a heart attack
- Missed heartbeats
- Fear of making a fool of self

These symptoms can vary from one panic attack to another, adding to the sufferers agony and confusion. Though panic attacks usually pass in a few minutes, the effects usually linger on. A panic attack with less than four symptoms is classified as a limited symptom attack. The saddest thing is, a sufferer's level of fear or threat perception is so out of synch with reality, but he/she doesn't realize it. The actual situation is often completely unrelated to the panic. People with panic disorder develop phobias that don't originate from fear of an object or event, but due to the fear of another panic attack...

### **Types of Panic Attacks**

1. **Spontaneous Uncued Panic Attacks:** These panic attacks are linked to panic disorder. They come without warning, irrespective of the time of day or what the person is doing. Spontaneous attacks are not triggered by specific situations or places, they strike a person out of the blue and can occur during periods of relaxation or while sleeping.
2. **Specific Cued Panic Attacks:** These attacks happen in relation to a specific situation or place that is feared. They occur either in anticipation of that situation or when a person is in a situation where a panic attack has previously occurred. Symptoms usually become evident as someone enters the situation.

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3. **Situational Predisposed Panic Attacks:** These attacks are experienced by panic disorder sufferers. Some people may go through panic attacks in certain situations or places, though they're not scared of the situation or place by itself. They are predisposed to having attacks in these situations, but need not always have them. Someone can get a panic attack while driving, though the attack doesn't stem from a fear of driving.

**“Loneliness, insomnia, and change:  
The fear of these is even worse than the reality.”  
- Mignon McLaughlin**

### **Panic Attack Situations**

As mentioned earlier, panic disorders often lead to other complications that can vary from a mild speech impairment to a complete inability to face the world. And they can strike without warning – during a meeting, while shopping at a crowded mall, driving to work, sitting in an airplane or even in the middle of the night while sleeping! Panic attacks often occur in situations where people feel they can't exit easily, leading to a feeling of being trapped. But they can also happen for no apparent reason while one is at home or asleep. If left untreated, a one-off panic attack can grow into a panic disorder that can last weeks or years! But the good news is, panic attacks and panic disorder can be successfully treated. You don't have to live in fear for the rest of your life... The e-book 'Panic Away' describes the One Move Technique, which can eliminate panic attacks, irrespective of how long a person has been suffering from them. Based on advanced cognitive therapy, the technique can be learnt and applied in any situation.

### **Panic Disorder and Social Phobias**

As mentioned earlier, panic disorder often leads to some kind of fear or phobia. People who've suffered a panic attack often avoid situations similar to the one they were in when the panic attack occurred. This is known as situational avoidance. Some people with panic disorder actually develop a fear of open or crowded spaces known as agoraphobia! A fallout of this is that they feel threatened when they step out, so their home becomes a 'safe

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zone'. They steer clear off all situations that might lead to a panic attack and eventually end up living behind locked doors!

**“I start sweating and shaking and having panic attacks if I am not at home.”  
- Daniel Johns**

Even if one doesn't develop this kind of extreme phobia, one's quality of life certainly suffers due to panic disorder. Meeting people can lead to sweating, blushing, or trembling hands. And though these anxious and nervous responses to social situations are in no way life threatening or harmful, they can make a person extremely uncomfortable around people, making them shy away from social contact. Another dreaded area for people with panic disorder is public speaking. It can get them into a tizzy weeks or months before the actual event!

### **Diagnosing Panic Disorder**

Not all people suffering from panic attacks develop a full-scale panic disorder. In order to be diagnosed with panic disorder, one has to meet the criteria laid out in a manual published by the American Psychiatric Association, 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' (DSM). Doctors put sufferers through a series of exams and tests to determine if they have panic attacks, panic disorder or some other health condition with similar symptoms, such as thyroid or heart problems. These are some examinations:

**Physical exam** to measure height and weight, check vital signs like body temperature, heart rate and blood pressure, listen the heart and lungs, and examine the abdomen.

**Laboratory tests** that may include a complete blood count (CBC), along with thyroid and other blood tests, and maybe even an electrocardiogram to determine heart function.

**Psychological evaluation** by a mental health practitioner during which one discusses one's symptoms in detail, stress triggers, stressful situations faced, fears or concerns, consequences of the medical problem in one's life, such as relationships, career, etc.

### **Causes of Panic Attacks and Panic Disorder**

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Panic Disorder is a serious condition that nearly one out of 75 people suffer from. Symptoms usually set in during one's teens or early adulthood, and though the exact causes are unclear, these are some factors that can increase one's risk of developing panic attacks or panic disorder:

- **Major life transitions**

When one goes through a major change in life such as graduating, starting one's first job, marrying or having a baby, it can be highly stressful leading to a heightened state of anxiety, upping one's chances of having a panic attack.

- **Significant life stressors**

Stressful and traumatic events can trigger panic attacks. Stressors that can precipitate attacks are death or serious illness of a loved one, divorce or separation from a partner, physical or sexual abuse during childhood, accident or rape, losing a job, etc.

- **Genetics**

One can be genetically predisposed to panic attacks if a family member has suffered from them. Studies have confirmed the likelihood that one can inherit this disorder.

- **Chemical imbalance in the brain**

Medication can lead to increased activity in the part of one's brain involved in fear.

- **Flight or Fight Response**

You're probably familiar with the flight or fight response that acts as our body's alarm system, preparing us to either flee a danger scene or put up a fight. Anxiety is our immediate response to danger, it is an inbuilt mechanism meant to protect us from harm. But ironically so, during a panic attack, anxiety seems to be causing us harm! What happens is, during a panic attack the mental and physical manifestations that allow us to respond to danger get triggered, even when there is in no danger! The brain sends signals to the nervous system, hormones get released, the heart beats faster in order to pump more blood to the muscles, lungs and brain, the breath quickens to increase oxygen supply, muscles get tense and the body perspires. Many sufferers fail to realize that their way of thinking during a panic attack is what activates this fight and flight response! You see, the body can't tell the difference between thought and reality, so the 'what ifs' going through one's mind keep turning on the fight or flight response,

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making the threat seem very real. 'What if I'm going crazy!' 'What if I make a fool of myself?' 'What's happening to me? What if I'm about to die?'

To learn how to live life without any fear of panic attacks, take the Panic Away course. It teaches you the simple, but effective One Move Technique that breaks the cycle of panic attacks, without using any kind of hypnosis, medication, or breathing exercise. This technique will equip you to handle any situation that leads to panic attacks. What's more, you get a no questions asked refund within 8 weeks! \$67.95 is a small price to pay to be free of panic attacks for good!

### **Treating Panic Attacks**

In case you have any symptoms of panic attacks, make sure to get medical help. These attacks are difficult to manage on your own and without treatment they tend to get worse and can develop into panic disorder, so don't ignore them. Remember, both panic attacks and panic disorder are treatable. There are various therapies available that are extremely effective in treating these debilitating attacks:

- Most specialists feel that a combination of cognitive and behavioral therapies are most effective. They alleviate or get rid of anxious thoughts by first teaching you to recognize your panic attack triggers, and then, change the way you think and react to them. Eliminating negative thought patterns takes an attitudinal shift and powerful visualization. You may also be gradually exposed to situations that previously increased your anxiety levels. This kind of interoceptive exposure helps you to go through your symptoms in a controlled setting, and learn how not to let these symptoms develop into a full panic attack.
- Anti-anxiety medications, antidepressants, or even beta blockers used for the heart, are used to treat panic attacks. These are several types of medication prescribed, but they can take several weeks to take effect.:

**Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)** are antidepressants that have fewer side effects and are usually the first choice. Citalopram, escitalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine and sertraline are various SSRIs used.

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**Serotonin and Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)** such as duloxetine and venlafaxine are also antidepressants used to treat panic attacks.

**Tricyclic Antidepressants (TCAs)** are effective, but can have some serious side effects such as blood sugar and heart problems. They include desipramine, imipramine and nortriptyline.

**Benzodiazepines** like alprazolam, clonazepam and lorazepam, are mild sedatives that can be addictive if taken in high doses and for long periods. **Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs)** such as phenelzine, tranylcypromine, selegiline and isocarboxazid are rarely used due to their dangerous side effects.

- Relaxation techniques like breathing retraining and positive visualization also help in alleviating panic. When you're anxious, notice how your breathing rate is higher. By learning to breathe slowly, you can deal with anxiety.

Psychotherapy and medications combined produce the best results. You'll notice a marked improvement in 2 to 3 months time. The right treatment for panic disorder can prevent panic attacks or greatly reduce their intensity and frequency, providing significant relief to 70-90% of panic disorder sufferers. Another effective method you might like to consider is Joe Berry's One Move Technique. It took him 10 years to develop and improve upon this completely natural technique that eliminates panic attacks within minutes! Acclaimed as one of the popular and effective self-help panic attack treatments, it has already helped more than 26,000 sufferers get rid of panic. Using the One Move Technique, you'll learn how to shut off a panic attack before it even starts! Plus, you'll also get \$150 worth of free email coaching for an entire year!

**“You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience  
in which you really stop to look fear in the face.  
You must do the thing which you think you cannot do.”  
- Eleanor Roosevelt**

## **Self-Help Tips**

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- The more you accept your fears, the less pressure you'll be under and your panic attack symptoms will dissolve. It's all about understanding the symptoms and how they occur in order to get released from their grip. Even the symptoms of being disconnected from yourself or feeling that everything around you is unreal, can be effectively dealt with by first accepting it, flowing with it, in the knowledge that this too shall soon pass. Since the onset of a panic attack is usually dissociation, it makes sense to practice relaxing into it.
- Meditation is recognized as the oldest cognitive technique in the world. When you meditate, you transcend anxious thoughts and become centered in a state of calmness. This lays the foundation for learning the mindfulness cognitive technique that can be practiced through the day.
- Try some aerobic exercises to calm your mind. Plus, the added advantage of exercising is that, just like a panic attack, it puts your body into a heightened state of exertion. You soon learn to become comfortable with the exertion without fearing that your body can't handle it.
- Avoid substances like alcohol, caffeine and illicit drugs that tend to trigger or aggravate panic attack symptoms.
- Make sure that you stick with your treatment plan no matter what.
- Join a support group so you can connect with others suffering from panic attacks and extreme anxiety.
- Ensure that you get enough sleep, so you don't feel lethargic during the day.
- Stick to a balanced diet. After all, what you are eat impacts your anxiety levels. Alkaline-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables and juices are ideal for building inner calm. If you consume highly acidic foods, your body finds it difficult to eliminate toxins, making you more vulnerable to anxiety. Proteins, sugar, salt, alcohol, grains, nuts, and all dairy products, except yoghurt, are acidic in nature.
- One of the quickest and easiest ways to combat anxiety is to drink lots of water.
- Minerals in your body alkalize the acidity in your system. A deficiency in minerals can lead to an acidic pH level in your

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body. If you don't get enough minerals through your diet, you might want to use high quality mineral supplements.

Always keep in mind that you can successfully recover from panic attacks and panic disorder. You can live the life you've always dreamt of by defeating this debilitating problem. There is hope...

**“That the birds of worry and care fly over  
you head, this you cannot change,  
but that they build nests in your hair,  
this you can prevent.”  
- Chinese Proverb**