

# Strategies for coping with panic



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Remember the symptoms and feelings for a panic attack, although very frightening, are not in the least dangerous or harmful. Understand that what you are experiencing is just an exaggeration of normal bodily stress reactions.

Remember, that when you get excited, if for instance, you had won the Lottery, your body would react with churning tummy and a rapid heartbeat, your legs would be unsteady and you would probably feel hot and overcome by the experience. The symptoms are exactly the same when you are anxious; you just react differently when these feelings appear to come for no apparent reason, so you worry, become more anxious and possibly depressed.

## Don't fight your feelings

Do not fight your feelings or try to wish them away – be willing to accept and face them, secure in the knowledge that nothing awful will happen. In this way they will diminish and be less intense.

The main thing to remember is not to add to panic with frightening thoughts. Telling yourself that you will be okay, just as you have always been in the past, will definitely help. Try changing “What if” to “So what”.

The above also applies to those awful “doom and gloom” feelings as well. It is all down to tension and how we “think” about it.

If you find yourself starting to panic, try to visualize a “lollipop” lady with her red “STOP” sign and then say “STOP” to yourself. Start changing your panicky thoughts to positive ones – it can and does work!



# Positive thinking

We cannot stress how important positive thinking is; anxious people tend to always think in a negative fashion and this only keeps the fears alive and so adds to the problems.

## A typical example:

Imagine a sufferer contemplating going to “Tesco’s”. “I can’t because I had a panic attack last time; I know I will feel awful again.” Sufferers see the scene as it happened previously and imagine the scene will be the same again, picturing themselves in a terrible state. So, of course, they don’t go!

Change now, to the sufferer who has learned to accept and handle their anxiety with logical, positive thinking:

“I need to go to ‘Tesco’s’, I do feel a bit anxious because last time I had that bad panic attack but I know that I will not come to any harm.” So, armed with all their coping strategies, like the calm breathing exercise they go to “Tesco’s” even though they feel anxious, but the difference is that they feel in control of the anxiety. Perhaps they will set themselves a time limit or not attempt to walk the whole way around the store, using the experience as a step towards their ultimate goal.

Remember, one step at a time. Success builds confidence and confidence makes you feel positive because you know you can go to “Tesco’s” again. You have coped successfully and the reward is a wonderful feeling of achievement.

This, of course, applies to any situation where you previously panicked – positive thinking changes the way we deal with things. Negative thinking always has a bad effect – it stops us from doing the things we want to do. Obviously some or many of us create our own limitations; after all, we can’t all be superhuman beings.

# Summary

- When you feel the initial fear, drop your shoulders and relax as much as you can. Do the breathing technique (breathing through the Diaphragm).
- Don't fight the symptoms wait and give them time to pass, don't run away.
- Try and accept the feelings and symptoms because they are not going to harm you.
- Remember the feelings and symptoms are normal reactions to stress and anxiety.
- Don't add on frightening thoughts (thinking the worst will happen) the what if's.
- Panic Attacks won't last a long time if we deal with them properly
- You won't faint, collapse, have a heart attack or die. Accept panic for what it is.
- Nothing else will happen to you but the feelings of anxiety
- Try to believe you are not in danger you have just misinterpreted the situation.
- Tell yourself how well you have done. It is a great achievement.