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**Panic Attacks – Anxiety**

**By Jamie Ratliff**

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What is a Panic Attack?

You are driving across town, and get caught at a red light for a few minutes. As you sit there, you begin feeling a bit strange. Suddenly, your heart rate increases, a cold sweat starts on your forehead, and you feel faint. You can compare the initial feelings with the type of instant nervousness you get when you receive terrible news about a loved dying or having an accident. Your mind races to calm yourself down and relax, but you have lost faith in yourself. You continue to try and regain control by looking at the light and hoping it turns green. It has only been seconds, but it feels like half an hour. You begin to think of the last time this happened. You begin to have trouble breathing, pulling in quick short breaths. Your hands and feet go numb and are cold. Your stomach hurts and your lungs have a sharp pain. Your chest is tight and feels like a sledge hammer is banging on your chest cavity. Your vision becomes blurry, and you can't concentrate on an image too long or you know you will faint. You begin to wonder what will happen if you have a heart attack, or pass out in the middle of traffic. Humiliation starts to set in. You begin to worry about passing out and what people will think or do. This causes more panic. You have to get out of here, right now! Finally, the light turns green, and slowly the car in front of you pulls ahead and you go through the light. You immediately feel better, and the symptoms decrease. A few blocks ahead however, is another light. You begin making calculations in your head to see if you will make the next light green. As you get closer to the light, you anticipate the worse. You will get stuck here as well. Sure enough, the light turns red before you have a chance to zoom through. That idiot in front of you could have gone on yellow, and then you would be okay! Now the panic process begins again.

A panic attack causes a very fast reaction within the human body. The attack alters the functions of many organs such as the brain, heart, lungs, bladder, kidneys, eyes, muscles, and others. When our brain released the adrenaline, we start to experience a sudden rush of blood. Our heart begins pumping harder and harder. The blood flow is increased throughout our bodies. During this time, our respiration increases and we began breathing faster and faster. This is only the beginning of a panic attack.

### Breathing Techniques:

Before you can control your panic attacks, you must be able to remain somewhat calm during a panic attack. I know what you're thinking, "How am I supposed to remain calm during a panic attack?". Well, it is not easy. However, at the first onset of panic symptoms, you need to start monitoring your breathing. You will probably begin taking quick short breaths as soon as you get the panic feelings. You will start to breathe from your upper chest instead of your diaphragm. The best way to get a handle on your panic is to take slow deep breaths and reassure yourself with each one. I use a little trick of inhaling and saying to myself "Peace" with each inhalation. I make sure the breath is deep enough that my stomach is pushed out. I hold the breath for three seconds and then exhale all of it while saying "Relax". It is important to exhale all of the air in order to keep the balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body. It will be hard at first to do this. Your first instinct will be to take quick

breaths because you think you are having a hard time breathing. However, if you continue to take quick breaths, you begin to hyperventilate and that will only make things worse. Just tell yourself you will be okay and slow your breathing down immediately when you feel the panic coming. At this point, don't worry if you feel faint or have a hard time concentrating. Your concern at this moment is you're breathing. You will notice how much quicker you regain control when you practice this method. Your panic may dissipate for a few moments and return, but just start over again as soon as you notice your breathing increasing. I have found that the more you catch the panic, the less it will show up. I use this technique everyday when I eat lunch out. Yes, it is hard and difficult. At first I had a very tough time not "running away". However, I would just concentrate on my breathing and catch all my negative thoughts and replace them with positive statements such as the ones listed below. I notice that with each passing day it is easier and easier to eat in a restaurant when I am confident I can catch my panic before it becomes a full blown attack. I feel the ability to slow your body down by breathing "deep" is the first line of defense in a panic situation. I know it has stopped my panic from becoming a full blown attack hundreds of times.

### Relaxation:

It is also important to relax. First, find a relaxing cd or tape to listen to. Anything with ocean waves, natural sounds, etc will work. You are going to listen to the cd while you talk yourself into deep relaxation. It is hard at first, but don't give up! Lay down on your bed and get comfortable. I know you hear that heartbeat all ready, but just ignore it for now. Start by telling yourself you are going to relax. Close your eyes, and make sure your clothing is not restrictive. Start the music and take deep breaths. With each inhale say "Peace" and with each exhale say "Relax". It is a good idea to wait a few minutes and just concentrate on the music. When your mind starts to wander, immediately turn it back to the music. After a few moments, say to yourself, "My scalp is relaxing, and I can feel it tingling as it does." You should be able to feel your scalp relax a little. Then proceed to your forehead, and down to your eyes, your cheeks, nose, lips, entire face, neck, shoulders, etc..... You will be amazed as the muscles began relaxing on your command. It may take a while to relax. During a high anxiety time, it has taken me over 40 minutes to fully relax. I would be almost through when my heart would start racing and my heartbeat would be in my ears, etc. I just ignore my racing heart and start over. Once you are completely relaxed, enjoy the serenity for as long as you want. You may find it hard to stay in the relaxed state because your mind is not used to being relaxed. If it starts to wander and produce panic

thoughts, start over. I usually do this just before going to sleep, so I just turn over and go to sleep. The results are great. I notice the next morning I am a lot less anxious than the previous night. My day usually goes a lot better when I have done deep relaxation the night before. If you have trouble, try getting a hypnotic cd and learn the way it talks you through reaching a deep state of relaxation. In deep relaxation, you will not be able to "feel" your arms, hands, legs, or feet. You will be very limp and heavy. You may feel some of your muscles start to twinge on their own, this is okay. It is only your muscles getting comfortable. Remember, our bodies are so used to be wound up, it takes a little while to unwind. It may be scary at first, but just trust yourself, or me, or whoever you need to trust to get there. I promise you will see a difference in your anxiety. We have too much stress in our bodies, especially those of us who suffer from high anxiety and panic attacks. By relaxing, we are giving our bodies a chance to rest without the "clenching" we normally put it through each day. Also, the more you relax your entire body, the more you will be able to relax it during the day when you feel a panic attack coming on. I cannot stress enough how encouraging you will find this exercise to be.

### Self Talk:

I also want to share with you other things of encouragement. The way we talk to ourselves can play a

big role in our anxiety and panic. If you take the time to listen to your thoughts, you will find that many are negative. I use the following positive thoughts for encouragement. They are not listed in any particular order, but I think you will know when you can use them. It is very important to catch your negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones.

- I am not ashamed of my panic and anxiety
- What can I learn from Panic instead of being terrified of it?
- I want to face the symptoms to gain new skills.
- It's okay to be anxious.
- I won't guard against anxiety and panic.
- I will consider all of my "tests" as practice, not "tests".
- I will be okay with myself if I am not able to do something I want to do. I will not consider it a failure, just practice.
- I can live with uncertainty.
- It's okay if it doesn't work.
- I will allow the anxiety to do what it wants without trying to stop it.
- I will try to allow myself to let go of control. The more I can let go, the better.

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- Each panic situation is an opportunity to practice.
- The best way to get through panic is to allow it.
- I can accept these thoughts for what they are – feelings. I have had them before and it's no big deal.
- The more I allow the panic and anxiety the better.
- This will get better, it just takes time. I can try to accept that I am making progress.
- Setbacks are a normal part of recovery. I will try and welcome them as they happen.
- It's okay to have a panic attack. I will try not to fight it and allow it to happen.
- The more I allow these panic feelings the better.
- When I stop caring about panic attacks, they will go away.

Jamie has suffered personally from Panic and Anxiety attacks. He has a website at

### **How To Know If You're Suffering From Panic Attacks**

#### **By John Page**

Most people will experience at least one or two panic attacks at some point in their life. This will happen when a person finds himself in an extremely stressful situation. The body then activates what is known as the "fight or flight" mechanism. This phenomena is considered normal when it comes at a highly stressful situation. But for some people, the Panic attacks come almost at random, or in a very mildly stressful situation. This is considered a Panic attack disorder and as you may imagine it greatly affects the lives of the person who has it and his close environment. So what are the main panic attack symptoms? How can you tell if you are having one?

Panic attacks symptoms are surprisingly similar to a heart attack, but don't worry – the two can be easily distinguished by ant doctor. While having a panic attack the symptoms a person will experience will include:

· Quickness of breathing · Increased heart rate · Increased body temperature · An overwhelming feeling of dread or fear (panic). · Tightness in the chest · Tingling in one or both arms and/or the tips of the fingers · Profuse sweating · Minor delusions · Unreasonable fear towards random objects or events · Lightheadedness · Dizziness · Nausea

The symptoms listed above are common symptoms related to panic attacks, each varying from person to person. Most chronic panic sufferers tend to have a unique set of symptoms that mark their panic attacks.

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By the way, the feeling of tightness in the chest leads some of the sufferers to believe that they are having a heart attack. However, any doctor can tell you that a real heart attack has additional key symptoms that most are unlikely to ignore.

So, How to tell for sure if you're having a panic attack?

Besides experiencing any combination of the symptoms mentioned above, there are a few exclusive factors behind real panic attacks.

- Panic attacks are very limited in time. The body can maintain this reaction for no more than 15 minutes. Anyone who experiences a combination of some of the symptoms that are described above can rest assured they will pass before long.
- Another major factor of panic attacks is the feeling of anxiety that follows an attack. Most people who experience a panic attack tend to worry about attacks that will follow. This is a natural reaction, and another reassurance that all you experienced was an anxiety attack. This feeling of fear will in most cases be gone within a week's time.

Having said that, you must pay attention to feeling of fear that lasts for weeks, as well as recurring attacks. These may indicate that you suffer from a chronic panic disorder, and not just an isolated incident. If this is the case it would be wise to seek help with a medical physician or psychiatric doctor in order to control the attacks.

Want to learn more about Panic attack disorder? Visit the panic attack blog at



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