

HELP, what to do in case of...

# A PANIC ATTACK

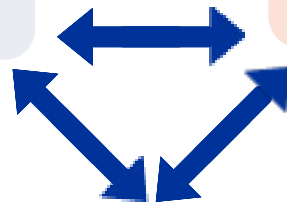
A **panic attack** is a **period of intense anxiety**. During a panic attack, you may experience a variety of unpleasant **physical symptoms, thoughts and feelings**. It is important to know that these symptoms are always **transient**. A panic attack can be a very intense experience, but it weakens after a few minutes to half an hour.

## Thoughts

- Thinking you are going to faint or have a heart attack due to physical reactions
- Focusing on negative thoughts as an attempt to avoid the panic attack
- Thoughts of possible loss of control
- Thoughts of dying

## Feelings

- Nervousness
- Feeling uneasy/discomfort
- Feeling threatened
- Feeling unreal



## Physical sensations

- Hyperventilation and feeling dizzy
- Palpitations, chest pain and shortness of breath
- Hands and feet feel cold
- Perspiration
- Dry mouth
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Shaking or trembling



The different elements reinforce each other and can cause a tendency to start avoiding the location where this panic attack has occurred. Fear of the fear arises, also known as **anticipation anxiety**.

# What to do **before** and **during** a panic attack?

## Before

### ➤ **Recognising symptoms**

Learn to recognise your physical symptoms and the thoughts of an oncoming panic attack (See infographic [stress signals](#)). This will help you understand what is going on inside you when a panic attack occurs. This can already be calming.



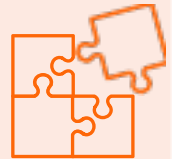
### ➤ **Exercise breathing:**

- **Purpose?** To bring your body into a state of relaxation. After practice, you can apply this when you feel a panic attack coming up.
- **How?** Exhale longer than you inhale. Inhale 6x/min or try abdominal breathing.
- **More info?** See Infographic [abdominal breathing](#).

## During

### ➤ **STEP 1: Focus your attention on the surroundings**

- 5 things you can **see**
- 4 things you can **feel**
- 3 sounds you can **hear**
- 2 scents you can **smell**
- 1 flavour you can **taste**



What is happening around me? Is there a real physical danger or is it just my own thoughts?

**Tip:** Always have a sweet with you so you can focus your attention on this.

### ➤ **STEP 2: It is a normal reaction**

Know that a panic attack is a normal reaction to moments of very high stress and is temporary.

### ➤ **STEP 3: Use the learned breathing techniques**

Try to bring your body back to a relaxed state by focusing on your breathing.

### ➤ **STEP 4: Look for distractions.**

Give yourself a moment to recover and seek out loved ones if they can help you relax.

*"People do not get upset by the events, but by the way they look at those events. What confuses people are not facts, but dogmatic opinions about the facts." - Epictetus*