



Anxiety attacks can be a frightening experience which can leave a person frantic and terrified. It could be triggered by numerous reasons, unique to each person and their own lifestyles and worries, but the one thing that remains constant is the fear that one experiences when it hits. In order to handle these attacks, one has to properly diagnose it first, which means we have to find out what the symptoms can be.

Handling anxiety attacks

Now, these symptoms are a vague description of what can be happening to a person since everyone feels a different version of it and on different scales. However, they give us a rough idea of when we can term a behaviour as an anxiety or panic attack. Both physical and emotional symptoms can occur simultaneously during an attack, leaving a person even more frightened.

Physical symptoms include:

- Palpitations, increased heart rate, chest pain or discomfort in your chest.

- Excessive sweating

- Experiencing shortness of breath

- Shaking or trembling, feeling disoriented.

- Nausea and dizziness, leading to near fainting in extreme cases.

- Experiencing sudden temperature changes in the body such as heat sensations or a chill.

Emotional symptoms include:

- Worrying too much

- Fear of losing control, going crazy or dying.

Panic attacks do not normally last for more than a few minutes, but in some cases, it can last up to half an hour.

RECOGNISE, ACCEPT AND CONFRONT

Once you can recognise your own symptoms, you are in control. The first step to confrontation is acceptance. Reminding yourself that the breathlessness is not a disease, but a temporary attack which will eventually pass lets you steer your emotions your way, and lets you know that you will be OK. Focus on your past attacks and remember how they simply passed by without inflicting harm. The easier you see it, the quicker it will pass, and eventually, will stop showing up all together.

PRACTICE BREATHING EXERCISES

One of the common occurrences during a panic attack is irregular breathing, which elevates one's anxiety further. Practicing a few breathing exercises can help one get over and cope with this issue during an attack. The idea is to breathe in slowly and deeply through the nose so the lungs fill up slow and steady, and breathe out slowly, deeply and gently through the mouth. Counting and

keeping the eyes closed while breathing is also helpful and lets you calm down faster.

Panic attacks are always uncalled for, so if you happen to be in a busy environment which feeds your anxiety, close your eyes to block out all outside stimuli, and then practice your breathing exercises.

FOCUS

Focusing on a single object during an attack can sometimes help one calm down. Try to pick out a single object around you, and start to note all the details about it. From the different fonts on a book cover to its thickness, the torn corners, or how the clock ticks, the details on the back, how the hands are structured. Focus on the colours, shapes, sizes and every minute detail as this channels your energy onto the object and draws it away from your anxiety.

MUSCLE RELAXATION

Muscle relaxation helps to control the body's response to an extent, in turn, controlling panic attack symptoms. Focus on relaxing one muscle at a time consciously. It can be the tip of the fingers, followed by the forearm, the shoulders and so on. This however requires a lot of practice for you to implement during an attack. If you are prone to attacks, practice this before bed every night, since it also allows better sleep.

PICTURING A HAPPY PLACE

This is a common sentence that you have probably heard a hundred times. But the reason why it is so talked about is because it works. Picturing your happy place is like your mind telling you that you are okay, which, slowly but surely, stops a panic attack.

Think of the most relaxing and calm atmosphere you can think of which makes you happy; be it a serene bamboo forest, a sunny beach with your toes inside the warm sand, a cabin amongst the clouds on a mountaintop or a waterfall with the breath-taking sounds of water crashing down. Focus on the sounds, the temperature, the scents and the atmosphere, everything you can allow your mind to do. These help the mind relax, and aids in controlling and eliminating your panic attacks.

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