



Panic Attacks

What is a panic attack?

A panic attack is one of the most terrifying experiences a human being can ever have! It can happen to someone who has anxiety problems almost anywhere, in their home, at their work, in a supermarket, on the street or in a taxi cab.

During a panic attack the sufferer knows their body is out of control. While it's occurring they believe that they are going mad or they will die shortly. They have several bodily symptoms:-

1. They feel their heart pounding and racing leading some sufferers to believe they are having a heart attack and this is the moment they will die.
2. They may sweat a lot due to the fear they feel.
3. They may tremble or shake
4. They may feel they can't breathe and in fact start to hyperventilate, that is over breathing.
5. They may feel nausea, like throwing up.
6. They may feel dizzy, light headed and faint.
7. They may feel that suddenly the whole world around them has become unreal or even they themselves feel detached from their body.

Any combination of four of these bodily symptoms, including the fear of dying or of going mad, make up a panic attack. A panic attack can happen for no obvious or apparent reason but usually it will reach a peak within 10 minutes. Then the sufferer will start to calm down but may be in a state of shock.

What can you do to help?

1. Speak calmly and reassuringly to them, for example say "everything will be alright, you are safe here. This will not last very long".
2. If you notice they are hyperventilating or over breathing then ask them to hold their breath for as long as they can.
3. Then ask them to breathe in normally through the nose and to breathe out slowly and for as long as they can.
4. Offer the sufferer a drink of water.
5. Do not become alarmed or angry at the sufferer; they cannot control what is happening to them.
6. Afterwards suggest they contact their Doctor, or phone the Phobic Trust's Helpline on 0800 142 6943
7. to the sufferer to contact their Doctor or to phone the Phobic Trust Helpline on 0800 14 2694.