

How to Manage Panic Attacks

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Panic attacks, experienced by both children and adults, frequently push people to seek help. But what is really happening? The DSM-5 describes a panic attack as “an abrupt surge of intense fear or intense discomfort that reaches a peak within minutes [the abrupt surge can occur from a calm state or an anxious state]” and lists numerous physical and psychological symptoms that can appear during panic attacks, including:

- Palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Sensations of shortness of breath or smothering
- Feelings of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed, or faint
- Chills or heat sensations
- Paresthesias (numbness or tingling sensations)
- Derealization (feelings of unreality)
- Depersonalization (being detached from oneself)
- Fear of losing control or “going crazy”
- Fear of dying



With the onset of a panic attack, many people rush to the ER, thinking it’s a heart attack or other serious medical condition. [If you have symptoms of a serious health concern, please see a physician ASAP!] Panic attacks can instigate feelings of helplessness, traumatization, or anxiety. They can occur during a time of international stress (like a global pandemic), amidst interpersonal problems, or strike “out of the blue” at a time when everything seems fine. The main thing to know is that an actual panic attack will last for just minutes *if* you’ll begin to manage it as soon as it begins.

How to move beyond a panic attack:

- Tell yourself “It’s only a panic attack; my body could have released adrenaline because of a *perceived* threat. I can make healthy choices to move from this stress reaction by trusting God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.”
- Continue speaking calmly to yourself: “My body could be in the ‘hot’ sympathetic nervous system (SNS). Relaxing now, I’ll move back to my ‘cool’ parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). I’m not in danger; it just feels like I am.”
- Replace distorted thoughts (especially Catastrophizing). Tell yourself the Truth, such as *God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble* (Psalm 46:1). Apply chapter two of *Core Healing from Trauma*.
- Look at your watch or a clock and remind yourself, “This will only last a few minutes.”
- If you’re chest breathing, switch to diaphragmatic breathing: breathe deeply, inflating your lungs as you inhale through your nose and emptying your lungs as you exhale through your mouth. I=Inflate; E=Empty.
- Start a program of regular exercise, checking with your physician for ideas.
- Limit your intake of sugar, caffeine, and other stimulants.
- Be intentional, choosing calming music, media, books, and activities.
- “Ground” yourself in the present. Learn grounding exercises so you’re ready to use them when needed.

Don’t be pulled in different directions or worried about a thing. Be saturated in prayer throughout each day, offering your faith-filled requests before God with overflowing gratitude. Philippians 4:6, TPT



YOU are invited to a workshop, ***Helping People Heal from Trauma***, I'm teaching at Christ Fellowship Church, 5343 Northlake Blvd, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418, on **Saturday, October 23**, from **9:00am** through **1:00pm**.

Sponsored by Palm Beach Atlantic University, the workshop utilizes ***Core Healing from Trauma*** to equip you to live in hope and freedom in a world of increasing anxiety, depression, and other emotional concerns—and learn how to help others, too.

There is **NO CHARGE** for this event. However, the event sponsors need to know by **October 16th if you** plan to attend. Breakfast is included. **Please send your reservations ASAP** to Dr. Phil Henry at philip_henry@pba.edu.

Please remember to register by October 16th!



For practical ways to manage anxiety, trauma, or depression, you can work through Core Healing from Trauma, a biblical counseling workbook for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdejH>), and now available as an audiobook on **audible**. You can subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>