



Helpful Tips for Panic Control

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Taken from the book Overcoming Anxiety and Depression and Breathing Correctly in COPD/Emphysema: A Self Care Book for People with COPD and a Psychosocial Manual for Professionals

by Vijai Sharma, intended for future publication

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Here is a help “Tip Sheet” for controlling anxiety and panic attacks. I must emphasize that there are no short cuts. Please review this presentation in its entirety to formulate your own action plan for controlling panic attacks and stabilizing your breathing.

1. Relax your shoulders, neck and whole body and start doing [Pursed-Lip Breathing](#) (PLB). Don't strain the breathing, slow, soft, gentle, rhythmical and consistent flow of breath. Count your exhale silently in your head such as 1-2-3-4. Look in front of you and gaze at something to focus your mind at whatever is in front of you, wall paper, some object, table, chair, whatever you can focus on.

2. Remind yourself repeatedly until you can believe that your panic attack is a biological emergency response. During any emergency, your whole system gets into a high gear. It doesn't mean you will pass out or stop breathing or never catch your breath. Believing in a positive outcome helps to reduce the anxiety.

Take all precautions as recommended by your doctor. Expect and believe that this moment will turn out all right for you.

3. Constantly repeat to yourself that panic symptoms are no doubt unpleasant, but not as dangerous as you might imagine them to be.

4. Know that just as you have a biological emergency response, you also have a biological "calming response." Yes, with steady practice you can learn to calm yourself out of a panic attack.

5. Unpleasant symptoms of an anxiety/panic attack can be brought under control in five minutes if you start calming down and not pump more adrenaline into your blood by "panicking" about the panic attack. By thinking calming thoughts, you will be able to stop pumping more new adrenaline. Adrenalin that was already released in your system "driving your motors" will eventually be neutralized.

6. Do not "fight" with panic attack symptoms. Fighting and desperately trying to stop them makes it worse. Start PLB. Try to "flow" with the symptoms with correct breathing. Form the intention of becoming calm in spite of what your body seems to be telling you.

7. The moment you notice any signs of a panic or anxiety attack, pace your breathing by counting silently in your head. If your exhalation is shorter than inhalation, first equalize it with the help of PLB and then try to make your exhalation 1 or 2 counts longer than inhalation.

8. Say silently in your head words that are reassuring and calming, such as, "I am becoming calm" "It will take a few minutes" "I can handle it as I have handled it before." "I am calm and steady."

Maintenance Therapy

1. Learn a relaxation technique and practice it daily at least two or three times for 15 to 20 minutes each time. There are many self-taught methods of relaxation available on tapes and books.

2. Monitor your breathing all the time. The moment you notice a breathing irregularity, do PLB and acquire consistent flow of breath. Learn to breathe from your diaphragm. Pay steady attention to your breathing, monitor and normalize it right away. Form a habit of breathing slowly and smoothly.

3. Learn to notice the advance signs of an anxiety attack before it becomes severe. Step up your relaxation to bring about the calming response.

Please review the whole section carefully. Also refer to the ["Tips for Anxiety/Panic](#)

[Control: Calming the Breath, Mind and Body.”](#)

Self-Help Exercise

If you have experienced panic attacks, write things that have worked for you in the past.

Which emergency tips can you use in the future to get a handle on your panic attack?
