

During a Panic Attack

1. Remember that although your feelings of stress and symptoms are very frightening, they are not dangerous or harmful.
2. Understand that what you are experiencing is just an exaggeration of your normal bodily reactions to stress.
3. Do not fight your feelings or try to wish them away. The more you are willing to face them, the less intense they will become.
4. Do not add to your panic by thinking about what **"might"** happen. If you find yourself asking **"What if?"** tell yourself **"So what!"**
5. Stay in the present. Notice what is really happening to you as opposed to what you think might happen.
6. Label your stress level from zero to ten and watch it go up and down. Notice that it does not stay at a very high level for more than a few seconds.
7. When you find yourself thinking about the fear, change your **"what if"** thinking. Focus on and carry out a simple and manageable task such as counting backwards from 100 by 3's or snapping a rubber band on your wrist.
8. Notice that when you stop adding frightening thoughts to your fear, it begins to fade.
9. When the fear comes, expect and accept it. Wait and give it time to pass without running away from it.
10. Be proud of yourself for your progress thus far, and think about how good you will feel when you succeed this time.

Self-care

Learning how to relax may help you head off a panic attack. You can learn to relax through a variety of techniques, such as meditation, muscle relaxation, relaxed breathing and guided imagery (visualization).

Relaxation is more than getting away from the work-a-day grind, and it's more than the absence of stress. It's a specific, intentional action that's positive and satisfying — a feeling in which you experience peace of mind. True relaxation requires becoming sensitive to your basic needs for peace, self-awareness and thoughtful reflection and having the willingness to meet these needs.

Relaxation techniques can help lessen the discomfort and duration of the signs and symptoms of stress, such as headaches, anxiety, high blood pressure, trouble falling asleep, hyperventilation, and clenching or grinding your teeth. One simple method is to

remove yourself from a stressful situation, block the world out and concentrate on your body. These steps can help you relax:

- **Sit or lie in a comfortable position and close your eyes.** Allow your jaw to drop and your eyelids to be relaxed and heavy, but not tightly closed.
- **Mentally scan your body.** Start with your toes and work slowly up through your legs, buttocks, torso, arms, hands, fingers, neck and head. Focus on each part individually. Where you feel tension, imagine it melting away.
- **Tighten the muscles in one area of your body.** Hold the muscles for a count of five or more before relaxing and moving on to the next area. This is a good method for releasing tension. Tighten the muscles of your face, shoulders, arms, legs and buttocks.
- **Allow thoughts to flow through your mind, but don't focus on any of them.** Many people find using autosuggestion to be a great help. Suggest to yourself that you're relaxed and calm, that your hands are heavy and warm (or cool if you're hot), that your heart is beating calmly, and that you feel perfectly at peace.
- **Breathe slowly, regularly and deeply during the procedure.** Once you're relaxed, imagine you're in a favorite place or in a spot of great beauty and stillness. After five or 10 minutes, rouse yourself from the state gradually.

To maximize the benefits of these stress-reduction techniques, be sure to also get adequate sleep, eliminate caffeine and other stimulants from your diet, and engage in regular exercise. About 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity most days of the week can improve your psychological well-being.