

Wellness Counseling Corner Newsletter

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MYTH VS REALITY

MYTH

Snap a rubber band on your wrist every time you have a bad thought

If a panic attack gets too bad, you can pass out or lose control.

If you have an anxiety disorder, it is important to avoid stress and situations that make you feel "stressed."

Always carry a paper bag in case you hyperventilate.

The causes of anxiety disorders are usually rooted in childhood, so effective therapy must focus on that time period.

Medications for anxiety are addictive so they should be taken only if absolutely necessary.

Medication is the only treatment for anxiety disorders.

REALITY

Studies show that suppressing your thoughts makes them stronger and more frequent. Think of it this way: The thoughts you resist persist.

It's unlikely you will faint, which is caused by a sudden drop in blood pressure. During a panic attack your blood pressure does not fall; it actually rises slightly.

Treating yourself as if you are fragile and avoiding risk leads to feeling demoralized. Avoiding anxiety tends to reinforce it. You can be anxious and still do whatever you have to do.

Paper bags can serve as safety crutches that keep you anxious about being anxious. Hyperventilation, while uncomfortable, is not dangerous.

Research shows that effective treatment focuses on the here and now, including new skills to manage thoughts, emotions, discomforts, and behavior.

SSRI and SNRI antidepressants are not addictive. Benzodiazepines might be helpful in the short term, but they can lead to increased tolerance and dependence after long-term use.

Medication can be effective. But scientific research shows that cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) may be just as or more effective than medication (or a combination of CBT and medication) for most people, especially in the long run.

Coping with Panic Attacks

Understanding different types of panic attacks can improve coping strategies. Expected or anticipated panic attacks are associated with a specific fear. For example, flying or public speaking could prompt an expected panic attack. In contrast, unexpected panic attacks can occur without an identified stimulus.

Symptoms of panic attacks include accelerated heart rate, sweating, and trembling. Additional symptoms include chest pain, feeling dizzy or disoriented, and numbness or tingling sensations. When you recognize these symptoms in yourself it is important to shift focus on coping strategies. Learning coping strategies before a panic attack occurs, and implementing the strategies can decrease the severity of the panic attack.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/diagnosing-panic-disorder-2583930>

Coping Strategies for Panic Attacks

- Focus on Deep Breathing
 - Breathe in through your nose while counting to 5
 - Hold for 5
 - Exhale through your mouth for 5
- Count Backwards
 - Start counting backwards from 100 by 3s
 - Counting at random intervals aids in refocusing
- Practice Grounding
 - Look around you and identify 4 things you can see, 3 things you can touch, 2 you can smell, and one you can taste
- Talk Therapy
 - Talking with a therapist can help increase understanding of panic attacks

<https://www.psycom.net/when-panic-attacks-how-to-stop>

PANIC ATTACK

SYMPTOMS

WAYS TO STOP

SWEATING			CHEST PAIN OR DISCOMFORT
DIZZINESS			NAUSEA OR ABDOMINAL DISTRESS
ACCELERATED HEART RATE			CHILLS OR HEAT SENSATIONS
SENSATION OF SMOTHERING			FEELING DIZZY, UNSTEADY OR FAINT
TREMBLING			FEAR OF LOSING CONTROL OR DYING

REFOCUS YOUR ATTENTION



FOCUS ON TAKING SLOW, DEEP BREATHS



SPLASH WATER ON YOUR FACE



REMINDED YOURSELF THAT THESE FEELINGS AREN'T DANGEROUS AND WILL PASS



GO FOR A WALK OR DO LIGHT EXERCISES

Breathing Exercises for Panic Attacks

If you're breathing quickly during a panic attack, doing a breathing exercise can ease your other symptoms

- breathe in as slowly, deeply and gently as you can, through your nose
- breathe out slowly, deeply and gently through your mouth
- some people find it helpful to count steadily from one to five on each in-breath and each out-breath
- close your eyes and focus on your breathing