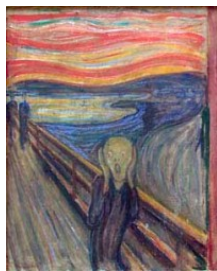


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[The Everyday Panic Attack](#)

Don't panic! It will pass...

A crisis situation. Your body focuses on short term survival. The adrenaline level increases, your blood pressure rises, you breathe faster. Your feet are ready to start running; your arms are tense, ready for battle. The pupils dilate in order to receive more light. You feel the imminent danger, you know something is wrong. No, it is not an action sequence in a movie, it is a panic attack. A panic attack is the most common emotional disorder worldwide, eventually affecting one out of 75 people. At least 1.6 percent of adult Americans, or 3 million people, will have panic attacks at some time in their lives. The panic attack is a sudden, overwhelming episode of fear, with no apparent reason. In order to see if you are exposed to a panic attack, you must first take a look at the stress level in your life, the stress igniting more easily fear in dealing with a certain situation. Panic attacks can occur at any time, even during sleep. An attack generally peaks within 10 minutes, but some symptoms may last much longer. It usually comes with sweating, racing heartbeat, chest pains, shortness of breath, dizziness, trembling, numbness, terror, fear of going crazy or a desire to escape. Among the things which cause such an attack are important life transitions (marriage, birth of a child etc), severe stress, a genetic disposition, hormonal imbalances or a history of emotional trauma. Panic attacks are unexpected, coming without a clear warning or a particular reason, occurring in repetitive situations. Your mind is immediately filled with thoughts that you might die from a heart attack, that you might suffocate, you will go mad or lose control. The mind quickly learns the situation in which a panic attack has happened, so, next time a panic response can be due to a situation or environment that the mind was unable to deal with. Panic attack is often followed by agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces. From an evolutionary perspective, this fear is justified since thousands of years ago open spaces represented the possibility of being attacked by animals. 60% of all panic attacks are accompanied by hyperventilation, a sign that the body has too much oxygen and that it needs a certain amount of carbon dioxide. Holding your breath can prevent the dissipation of CO₂. Breathing in a paper bag is also a useful technique. The best way to reconfigure your breathing pattern, which becomes irregular after such an attack, is to start off with exercises. The part of the brain where the attack occurs is a very primitive one, meant for survival rather than solving complex situations. It is not the rational part of the brain that deals with the difficulties, but the irrational one. The planning, rational mind is taken over by an emotional response. Taking care of panic attacks by yourself is simple. If one has been diagnosed with it or knows the symptoms, there are some techniques capable of stopping the attacks. The first step is a relaxation of the muscles and becoming aware of the tension, after which you tense and relax all major muscles. Slow down your breathing, by breathing as if blowing out a candle. Put your hands on your stomach to feel the rhythm of your breathing. Aside from this home treatment, a combination of psychotherapy and medications produces good results. Improvement is generally noticed in about 6 to 8 weeks. Most specialists agree that a combination of cognitive and behavioral therapies is the best treatment for panic disorder. Sometimes people with these kinds of attacks are likely to suffer from other emotional problems. Many people that have had problems with friends and family or lost jobs while struggling with panic attacks are more prone to alcohol and other drug abuse, have greater risk of attempting suicide, spend more time in hospital emergency rooms, spend less time on hobbies, sports and other satisfying activities, tend to be financially dependent on others, report feeling emotionally and physically less healthy than non-sufferers or are afraid of driving more than a few miles away from home. Suicide attempts are also more frequent at

those who previously suffered a panic attack. Untreated, the attacks tend to continue for months or even years.