

## Here's 5 tips on how to deal with a panic attack:

1. Remember that the feelings of panic are normal bodily sensations. They are not harmful. Also the panic reaction was triggered by a situation that is not actually dangerous in the here and now.
2. Accept what is happening to you. Do not run away. If you wait, the fear will pass.
3. Use the opportunity to practice controlling your anxiety. Start by trying to slow down your breathing.
4. Try to think of the situation in a more positive way. This will stop you adding to the panic by thinking frightening thoughts.
5. When you begin to feel better plan what to do to next make the situation easier. Carry it out in a relaxed way. Do not hurry.



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# Anxiety and Panic Attacks

Information and advice on how to deal with anxiety and panic attacks.

**rasasc**



**Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre**

for adults, children and young people in Cheshire and Merseyside

# Anxiety

## What is it?

Anxiety affects both the mind and the body. It refers to emotions and states of mind, such as fear, apprehension, being 'on edge', panicky or 'uptight', and worrying. It also refers to bodily sensations, such as muscle tension, sweating, trembling, breathing fast, 'butterflies in the stomach', feeling sick, headache or racing heart beat.

Anxiety is a normal healthy reaction. It happens to everyone in times of danger. When you are anxious your body's system speeds up, which causes the symptoms above. This speeding up can be an advantage. It means you are ready for action and enables you to respond quickly.

Anxiety becomes a problem when it occurs at times when there is no real danger or when it goes on long after the stress is over. This is when anxiety begins to interfere with everyday life and it becomes necessary to learn to control it.

## What can I do?

Distraction helps. When you are worried or feel tense it is often difficult not to think about it. But these thoughts end up making you feel worse. They keep the vicious circle of anxiety going.

If you do not let yourself pay attention to your symptoms, then they will ease away of their own accord. It is very difficult just to turn your attention away from unpleasant feelings. There are two things you have to do:

- 1. Decide not to think about them**
- 2. Fill your mind with something else - distract yourself**

## Some activities others have found useful include:

**Concentrating on what is happening around you** - e.g. listening to someone else's conversation or count how many red things you can see.

**Mental activity** - doing mental arithmetic, reciting poetry or doing a crossword.

**Physical activity** - such as cleaning, washing the car or taking the dog for a walk.

# Panic Management

It is always easier to control anxiety in its earlier stages. If you can learn to recognise the beginnings of tension the distraction techniques are more likely to work.

If you miss the early warning signals and the anxiety builds up into panic it is hard to think clearly.

For this reason it is best to learn what is right for you when you have a really bad panic attack.

