

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PANIC ATTACKS

This leaflet will explain what a panic attack is and how you can help control them.

FACTS

- Some people think when they have a panic attack they are dying, this is not true
- Some people think they are having a heart attack
- Some people feel they are suffocating
- Some people get chest pains

A panic attack will normally not last longer than 20 minutes.

THE CURE

You need to do two things:

1. Interrupt the body's fight or flight response by controlling your breathing.

By forcing yourself to take *very* slow deep breaths you break the body's automatic responses and start to slow everything down.

Basically you are taking it out of its 'Red alert!' state, and putting it back in its normal mode.

This does take practise.

Ask for one of our relaxation pamphlets, it will teach you how to relax and control your breathing so when you need to you can take control.

2. Distract your thoughts.

Your thoughts have, after all, started the panic attack.

Try to think of something calming, or happy or something you enjoy.

Once again the relaxation pamphlet can help you learn how to do this.

TALK TO SOMEONE

If you have panic attacks it can be a sign that you have a lot of worries.

Come and see one of the counsellors, we will be happy to help you.

What happens during a panic attack

1

Your mind thinks there is a danger nearby.

This might be a real danger, or an imagined danger.

This thought triggers strong feelings like fear, dread or terror.

2

Your thoughts and feelings switch on the body's natural protection mechanisms.

Adrenalin is released from glands inside you. This is a hormone that gets the body ready to release lots of energy very quickly. It's the start of the 'Fight or Flight' response.

3

The adrenalin makes your heart pump very fast. This is very useful if you are about to run away from danger, or to start to fight a threat.

Blood gets pumped more quickly to the lungs to grab lots of oxygen and take it to muscles that need it.

4

You start to breathe very quickly and deeply, to pull as much oxygen as possible into your lungs.

You may begin to feel dizzy or faint because you have so much oxygen in your system.

You may even have difficulty taking a breath as the body now has all the oxygen it can use.

5

The body believes you are about to do a lot of muscle work, either to run or fight.

When muscles do a lot of work they get hot. The body gets ready to reduce this heat by making the skin sweat.

6

By now your body is bursting with emergency energy.

But you are not using it up. The adrenalin starts to break down (this is OK, it always does!). You may start to tremble and shake as the unused energy your body has released starts to drain away.

