

A silhouette of a person's head and neck is shown in profile, facing right. The interior of the head is filled with a vibrant sunset scene over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water's surface. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and white, with some clouds. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

When Panic Attacks Me

Understand & overcoming
Panic Attacks.

Panic Attacks and how they present.

Panic attacks come on suddenly and out of the blue. They can happen at any time, or any place. You may experience a panic attack when shopping, while driving, at the cinema or within your work, home or social environment. They also can happen while you are sleeping causing you to wake in a heightened state of panic and fear. So the bottom line is that they can strike anywhere and at any time. You may experience only one attack, or they may escalate to occurring frequently. Panic attacks can present in many different ways. Fortunately, symptoms usually peak within a number of minutes, however, the recovery period can leave you feeling exhausted, confused and worn out and frightened.

Signs and symptoms:

Sense of impending doom or danger - Fear of death - Pounding heart. - Sweating -Trembling - Shaking - Feeling short of breath - Chest pain - Caught in your throat - Nausea and feeling sick in your stomach - Dizziness - Lightheaded - Feeling you may faint. Numbing or tingling sensations - Feeling of your environment being unreal - Feeling completely detached from yourself.

One of the most distressing things about panic attacks is the fear that you'll have another one. You may be left confused and overwhelmed and with an intense fear that you may experience more attacks. This in turn often leads people to make false associations with the location where the attack happens and can cause them to avoid such places, thus restricting their world even further with each subsequent attack.

Below we list some techniques you can use for yourself during a panic attack while waiting for an appointment with a Therapist.

- 1. Use deep breathing.** Breathe in for a count of four, hold for a second, and then breathe out for a count of four:
- 2. Recognize that you're having a panic attack.** By recognizing that you're having a panic attack instead of a heart attack, you can remind yourself that this is temporary, it will pass, and that you're OK.
- 3. Close your eyes.** Some panic attacks come from triggers that overwhelm you. If you're in a fast-paced environment with a lot of stimuli, this can feed your panic attack.
- 4. Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness can help ground you in the reality of what's around you. Since panic attacks can cause a feeling of detachment or separation from reality, this can combat your panic attack as it's approaching or happening.
- 5. Find a focus object.** Some people find it helpful to find a single object to focus all of their attention on during a panic attack. Pick one object in clear sight and consciously note everything about it.
- 6. Use muscle relaxation techniques.** Much like deep breathing, muscle relaxation techniques can help stop your panic attack in its tracks by controlling your body's response as much as possible.
- 7. Picture your peaceful place.** What's the most relaxing place in the world that you can think of? A sunny beach with gently rolling waves? A cabin in the mountains?

When to see a Doctor

If you have panic attack symptoms, seek medical help as soon as possible. Panic attacks, while intensely uncomfortable, are not dangerous. You should see your doctor for two main reasons. The first is to make sure that what you have experienced is properly diagnosed and that you are not suffering from any serious medical problem. The second reason is to have your doctor reassure you that you have indeed suffered a panic attack.

On their own, panic attacks can be difficult to resolve and without intervention, they can get worse. Panic attack symptoms can also resemble symptoms of other serious health problems, such as a heart attack, so it's important to get evaluated by your doctor if you aren't sure what's causing your symptoms.

There are two main routes to successfully treating and resolving panic attacks. Talk therapy is one important way of addressing your symptoms and your doctor may suggest that you take this route. Your doctor may also discuss the option of medication, usually in the form of benzodiazepines as a treatment, or a combination of one or both options.

Talk therapy has proven to be a very successful way of addressing panic attacks so that you can get on with your life without the fear of having to live with the numbing symptoms forever.

When to see a therapist?

You can see a therapist yourself without being referred by a doctor and clients come to us through both routes. The therapist will bring you through the various steps that empower you to overcome panic attacks and manage your life with purpose and meaning where you are in control. We hold the belief that you as a client will know when the time is right for you to commit to your self-empowerment through therapy. 'The client knows best' is our belief because it is the client who will empower themselves. You can book an telephone consultation with a therapist with the Cork Counselling Clinic for a free 15-minute consultation to discuss your needs and what may be the best approach for you. Simply visit our website and pick a time that works best for you for a phone call. We are delighted to work with people who suffer panic attacks and to see the progress they make.

Understanding the nature of Panic Attacks.

Even though panic attacks strike out of the blue and without any warning, this should not be confused with the fact that there is not an underlying stressor associated cause. Neither should it be viewed that you are a weak person. The opposite is most likely the case, that you are strong and have been too strong for too long. Exact causes of panic attacks remain unclear, they do present as running in families and there is a strong connection with a person having undergone a substantial life event that was particularly stressful. Normally, a person experiencing panic attacks is at the stage of having experienced several stressful events building up over a considerable amount of time. Small stressful events are not a difficulty in themselves, however, a number of them combined, or a continuous underlying low-level toxic stressor at work or in relationships, for example, can be incorporated into a persons 'norm'. Over time this can tax your resources until one day without warning you experience an attack. It is similar to overloading the electrical sockets in your home. Each extra device you plug in takes energy until one day you may plug in an extra, even small device which overloads the circuit and the power trips out. Panic attacks are just like that. Something small can now overload the system and that extra surge by way of an adrenaline rush triggers a panic attack. It is your bodies alarm system (the anatomical nervous system) letting you know that you have overextended yourself for too long. This extremely fearful event can and does cause people to rush to the accident and emergency department, in many cases believing they are having a heart attack. After some tests, you will be informed that you are not having a heart attack or about to die but have had an anxious event. You are left bewildered leaving the hospital with information that noting serious is happening. You may feel lost in the whole experience and as the event fades, anxiety can arise once again in the thought of 'what if this happens again?'. This is where the cycle of panic attacks can take on a life of their own. You are now afraid of being afraid of this happening again and should another one strike you can understandably believe that this cycle will continue indefinitely.

Resolving Panic Attacks

Self-help books, videos etc can be a great source of information. As it is difficult to overcome panic attacks alone then you may feel that the support of a therapist is the next step. Therapy is a very effective tool in helping to overcome your attacks and to lead a life unaffected by sudden panic. Engaging with a therapist in a safe space where you can understand yourself in an empowering way moving forward. The approach taken at Cork Counselling Clinic is to be fully present with the client as a person and not the problem. A trusting therapeutic relationship is built so that the client can explore themselves, come to a better understanding and take positive actions in moving forward. You can contact us for information to provide you with the best talk therapy for your specific and individual needs. Please see our website for more information at corkcounsellingclinic.com

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