

Stop Panic Attacks: Two Methods

METHOD #1: Interrupt and Regain Control

1) Remove as much stimulus as possible, or remove yourself from stimuli. Close your eyes, lower your eyes, or go to a less crowded part of a room/store, turn down music or remove yourself from a noisy atmosphere, get out of an excessively hot or cold space. If you are driving, slow down and pull off the road if it is appropriate.

2) Use imagery and remember you are in control. Choose a "STOP!" symbol from the selection to the right. Create the image of the stop symbol in your head and say "STOP!" to yourself.

3) Practice soft belly breathing (see page on "Diaphragmatic Breath"). Lengthen exhalation blowing through pursed lips-as slowly as possible. Begin to count your inhale and exhale. Make every effort to slow your exhale down, eventually making the exhalation twice as long as the inhalation.

4) Focus on an *Affirmation* or Rational thought:

"I am fine"

"I am safe"

"I control my inner peace"

"This is a biochemical process, nothing more"

"This is a programming error, and I can stop it!"

5) Direct your focus on something in or on your body. Focus on the sensation of the sole of your foot on the ground or in your shoe; feel the expansion of the ribcage when you breathe; feel cool air or a breeze on your skin, feel your heart rate lowering....you choose where to take your awareness in your body.

5) When you feel that you are able to control your exhalation, start scanning your body for tightness, and relax the muscles that are clenching. Relax your jaw, soften your eyes, relax your belly...this will create a more profound relaxation response.

METHOD #2: Ride it out, and remind "it" you are not afraid

Panic attacks are scary, but they cannot harm you. They peak in duration and pass eventually no matter what you do, but with effort, and understanding of the process, you can begin to reprogram your brain to break the cycle of panic/anxiety.

1) Speak to the "panic" as if it is a child throwing a tantrum. Say things like "go ahead, pitch your fit, you can't hurt me, I can ride this out-I am stronger than you-you are just a biochemical process and you can't hurt me.

2) Look at the time, and say to the panic "you have exactly 2 minutes to let it all out; so go ahead and give it your best, get it all out...bring it on-you can't hurt me.

3) Start timing and try to make your breath as even as possible...ride it out. Really tune in to your body and breath. As you are timing observe the sensations that the panic make happen in your body...heart rate is increased, do you notice it decreasing with each passing minute? You may be sweaty and the breath agitated, do you notice the change as the tantrum subsides? The more you do this, the quicker it will pass, and eventually they will subside completely. See "Reprogramming"

