

PANIC ATTACKS

PANIC ATTACKS WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW DO WE BEAT THEM?

Am I dying.....?

Having a heart attack....?

Going mad.....?

Quick! Call me an ambulance I cannot breathe....!

These are the thoughts one has when experiencing... The Panic Attack!

Why do they happen?

Why are they so very frightening?

How can you control them?

Mark Shields Investigates.

What is A Panic Attack?

Panic attacks are sudden, discrete periods of intense anxiety, fear and discomfort that have various causes from stress at home or at work to sometimes no obvious cause at all. The onset of these episodes is typically abrupt, and may have no obvious trigger. Although these episodes may appear random, they are considered to be a subset of an evolutionary response commonly referred to as "fight or flight" syndrome when the body is flooded with hormones mainly adrenalin that it believes it is defending itself from a particular event or situation.

In my experience they are at their most damaging when there is no apparent cause for the attack which leaves the sufferer confused and frightened wondering what is happening to them. Especially if this is their first experience.

Often the symptoms of a panic attack commonly last approximately ten minutes. However, panic attacks can be as short as 1-5 minutes, while more severe panic attacks may form a cyclic series of episodes, lasting for an extended period, sometimes hours.

What does it feel Like to Experience an Attack?

Many who suffer from panic attacks state they are the most frightening experiences of their lives. Sufferers report a sense of dying, "going crazy", and or experiencing a heart attack, feeling faint, sick, or losing control of themselves. These feelings may provoke a strong urge to escape or flee the place they are, where the attack happened. Also many people don't like to retrace their steps in the future for the fear of having a repeat attack.



Common symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- Fast Heart Rate and Chest Pains
- Feeling faint, dizzy, and unsteady on your feet, smothered.
- Hot and Cold Flushes, sweating
- Feeling sick, terrible butterflies.
- Feelings of worry and upset for no apparent reason.

Causes of Panic Attacks

Believe it or not the symptoms of a panic attack are the same symptoms you would feel when confronted with serious danger or upset. For example, imagine you were face to face with an angry gorilla that had just escaped from Jersey Zoo. You would panic,, all your senses would heighten in awareness, causing sweating, dizziness, butterflies and so on. This is obviously all quite normal and panic passes once the event has passed.

In the case of the everyday panic attack you have the same symptoms, a different cause and often anxieties that seem to last indefinitely, long after the panic attack has subsided. The reason for your body to react in this way is simply a build up of everyday stresses and worries, a breakdown, or overload of the conscious mind, or a build up of workload or problems at home or at work which can trigger the cause. Negative thoughts, constant worry, stress and overload are often the cause. You then enter a downward spiral of worry as to when and where the next attack will occur.

What happens internally?

Pressure and stress, a lack of sleep and worry, send a message of overload to the brain directly to the coping centre. The Hypothalamus. Once receiving the message that all is not well it raises the alarm and calls on the glands to help. Mainly the pituitary gland.

An alert is then sent to the adrenal glands which produce adrenalin and noradrenalin into the bloodstream and the effects these chemicals have on our anxiety levels is quite drastic and intense. Very briefly heres what happens. Liver releases blood sugar to the muscles for more energy.

Breathing gets faster to take in more oxygen. Heart speeds up to transport oxygen carrying blood to the parts which need it. Energy conservation occurs, digestion shuts down, and mouth becomes dry. Sweatiness occurs to cool down the body. Senses become on full alert. You become pale as blood is sent to body parts to protect vital organs .Hence hands and feet can become cold. Tensed muscles give off lactic acid into the bloodstream, which has a dramatic effect on increasing our anxiety levels in just a matter of seconds. We panic and anxiety increases as we wonder what's happening to us, and so the cycle continues.

Overcoming Panic Attacks

One in three of us will suffer from a panic attack in our lifetime so it is important to highlight that it is a common complaint. The first port of call would always be your GP who can recommend appropriate medication to help with the attacks.

There are also many successful alternatives for helping get rid of the panic beast forever and I believe first and foremost this journey starts from within. We all have the power to dismiss the beast in exactly the same way we created it. We may need a little help of course.

The first part of the process is to understand the enemy. I would recommend the books "Feel the fear and do it anyway" by Susan Jeffers and "Panic Attacks and How to Beat Them" by Christine Ingham

I believe we need to address the cause of the problem and once we establish the reason for Panic Attacks we will be in a far stronger position in putting a stop to them.

Alternative treatment used to prevent panic attacks could be Nuero Linguistic programming or Cognitive Behavior Therapy to change the way people change and process their thought patterns internally. Hypnotherapy to relax the body and allow appropriate reprogramming of the subconscious mind, Thought Field Therapy to aid the sufferer create instant calm in any

situation, and Alignment Breathing Techniques to rebalance your oxygen and carbon dioxide levels.

A psychotherapist would also be able to explain in detail the body's response to "fight or flight" and the appropriate strategies to overcome it.

I believe it is very important in every individual's journey to overcome panic attacks to always remember these two points:

No one has ever died from having a panic attack

No physical harm will come to you whilst having a panic attack

If you anchor yourself to these two thoughts and repeat them in your mind twenty times, the next time you feel an attack approaching you will have started the journey of taking the attack on, and will most definitely beat it in the long term.

I am always happy to answer any questions with regards to my monthly articles and can be contacted by email channelislandslifecentre@hotmail.com or telephone 01462 451473.

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