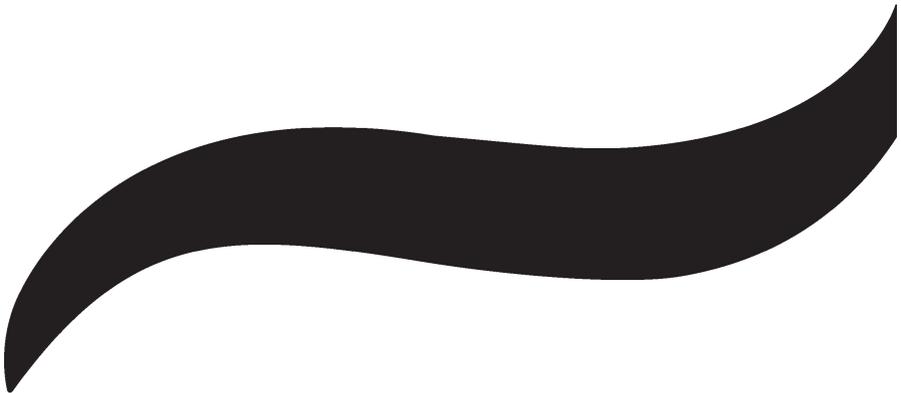


What is a Panic Attack?

Information for clients



WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK?

Everyone knows what panic is, and it is common to feel panicky from time to time:

- ❖ You discover you have had your wallet stolen
- ❖ You are sitting an exam. You look at the paper and realise you don't know the answers to any of the questions

It would be normal in either of these situations to feel a sense of panic. This feeling would pass fairly quickly.

A **panic attack** is a bit like 'normal' panic, but different in certain ways:

- ❖ The feelings seem to come 'out of the blue' and are not usually related to the sort of frightening situation described above
- ❖ The feelings are a lot stronger

It is because the feelings are **unexpected** and **strong** that they can be extremely frightening.

The truth is: **nothing** awful is going to happen, because panic attacks are **not** dangerous.

Lots of people have panic attacks. They are **not** signs of serious mental or physical illness. Panic affects your body, your mind and the way you behave, but in different ways for different people.

Here is a list of some of the things that can happen to people having a panic attack. Some people have all of the symptoms, others just a few.

Your body

- ❖ Difficulty in breathing
- ❖ Dizziness
- ❖ Racing heart
- ❖ Sweating
- ❖ Chest pains
- ❖ Tingling sensations
- ❖ Shaking

Your mind

- ❖ Feelings of utter terror
- ❖ Feelings of unreality, as though you're not really there

Frightening thoughts such as:

- ❖ "I'm going to have a heart attack"
- ❖ "I will collapse or faint"
- ❖ "I'm running out of air"
- ❖ "I'm going mad"
- ❖ "I'm losing control"
- ❖ "I've got to get out of here"
- ❖ "I'm going to make a complete fool of myself"

Your behaviour

- ❖ You try to leave the situation as quickly as possible
- ❖ You avoid the situation in the future

All of the panic symptoms described above are simply an extreme form of fear. Fear is our body's natural response to a situation we see as dangerous.

Fear is very useful. It prepares your body for action. This has been called the '**fight or flight**' response. When you feel fear, your body is preparing to fight or run away. When you are frightened, you:

- ❖ Breathe more quickly so that you can get lots of oxygen to your muscles
- ❖ Your heart beats faster to pump the blood faster round your body
- ❖ Your digestive system slows down so that your body can focus on the more immediate threat

This is your body's normal healthy reaction to situations where your body feels under threat. It is your body's alarm system.

The problem with panic attacks is that they usually occur when there is no clear physical threat at all. Your body is reacting as though it is about to be attacked when in reality it is not.

WHAT CAUSES PANIC ATTACKS TO BEGIN?

Panic attacks can happen for a number of reasons:

- ❖ Stress
- ❖ Health worries
- ❖ During a mild illness
- ❖ Because of strong emotions
- ❖ Out of the blue

WHAT KEEPS PANIC ATTACKS GOING?

Panic affects your body, your thoughts and your behaviour. All three work together to keep panic going.



WHAT TECHNIQUES CAN HELP ME COPE WITH AND REDUCE PANIC ATTACKS?

The good news is that panic attacks are very treatable. You may find that your panic attacks have already started to reduce because you have begun to recognise and understand, and accept that they are not harmful.

Panic affects your body, your mind and your behaviour. By learning to change in each of these areas you can learn to cope with panic attacks.

For more detail, please see leaflet PANIC: A Self Help Guide.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Elament website: www.elament.org.uk

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)
www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) www.samaritans.org
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) www.nhs24.com
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),
0800 019 2211 (National),
www.healthyworkinglives.com
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) www.childline.org.uk
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22
www.children1st.org.uk/parentline
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234

WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a new programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Stress Control Classes in communities
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx

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- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering

GUIDED SUPPORT:

Stress Control Classes

Stress Control classes will help develop skills and techniques to manage common issues caused by modern day living such as stress, anxiety or low confidence.

The classes are delivered in local community facilities and consist of six sessions lasting 90 minutes each. We will not need to speak about our issues during the class. Just sit back and listen about helpful stress control techniques. Feel free to bring someone along with you for support. To find your nearest class and book a place, call **0300 303 0447**.

Living Life to the Full - Online Course

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at **www.llttf.com** and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit **www.aod.llttfionline.co.uk**

Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).

NHS Lanarkshire - for local services and the latest health news visit www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk
NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line: 0300 3030 243

NHS inform - The national health information service for Scotland. www.nhsinform.co.uk
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 3030 243 or e-mail info2@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk



www.patientopinion.org.uk

Adapted with permission from information produced by NHS Borders

Pub. date:	September 2015
Review date:	September 2017
Issue No:	01
Produced by:	MMMHP

PIL.PANATT.13447.P