



Simple tactics for managing **anxiety**

We're in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. For many people, the uncertainty surrounding coronavirus is the hardest thing to handle. We still don't know exactly how we'll be impacted, how long this will last or how bad things might get, making it all too easy to catastrophize and spiral out into overwhelming dread and panic.

You don't have to be in the middle of a pandemic to have a panic attack—you could be on a hike, at a restaurant or asleep in bed when a strong surge of fear suddenly overwhelms you. This triggers physical symptoms like a pounding heart, sweating, shortness of breath, nausea, chest pain or trembling.

There are many things you can do—even in the face of this novel crisis—to manage your anxiety and fears.

Eight Helpful Tips:

1. Don't Distract Yourself.

As tempting as it may be to try to focus your mind elsewhere, the healthiest way to deal with a panic attack is to acknowledge it. Try not to fight your symptoms but keep reminding yourself that they will pass.

2. Breathe Through It.

An attack may make you take quick, shallow breaths, so get your breathing under control. Close your eyes. Then, let the air out gently through your mouth. If it helps, you can count from 1 to 5 on each inhale and exhale. After a few minutes, you should start to feel better. ➔



3. Keep Your Mind in the Present.

Notice five things you can see around you. Then, four things you can touch. Three things you can hear. Two things you smell. One thing you taste. When you stay grounded in what's going on around you, it gives your mind something better to do than focus on fear or bounce from one worry to the next.



4. Progressive Relaxation.

When you feel a panic attack coming on—or are in the middle of one—tense one muscle at a time and then relax it. Repeat this everywhere until your whole body is relaxed.



5. Stop the 'What ifs'.

Panic attacks feed on thoughts of "what if."

- + What if I can't do it?
- + What if I run into my ex?
- + What if everyone laughs at me?

Acknowledge that fear, then shift from "what if" to *"so what?"* Sometimes the worst-case scenario isn't as bad as it seems.

6. Careful with Coffee, Booze, Smoking.



Caffeine can make you feel nervous and shaky. It can also keep you awake, which can trigger tiredness later. Nicotine and alcohol can make you feel calm at first, then make you jittery as your body processes it. All three can trigger panic attacks or make them worse. It's best to avoid them.

7. Make Time to Exercise.

Physical activity lowers stress, which is one of the main causes of panic attacks. A workout, especially the kind that gets your heart pumping, can also get you to a calmer place. Can't work in a workout? Even a 10-minute walk can help.



8. Slow Down.

Slow your body down, and your mind will follow. Practices like yoga and tai chi use slow body movements and train the mind to be calm and aware.



If you think you might have an issue with anxiety, contact your EAP to connect with a provider who specializes in working with a wide range of anxiety-related issues.

Call your EAP today!
800-324-4327
Espanol 800-324-2480
info@ieap.com
4eap.com

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