mindhealth FACT SHEET

PANIC · UNDERSTAND IT, AND RIDE THE WAVE

Managing panic

A false alarm that feels like danger, and always passes.



In the body
Pounding heart, breathlessness

In the mind
"Something is very wrong"

The wave
Rises, peaks, then falls

01 What a panic attack is

A panic attack is a sudden surge of intense fear with strong physical symptoms: a pounding heart, breathlessness, dizziness, tingling. It feels dangerous, but it is not: it's your alarm system misfiring. It peaks within minutes, and it always passes.

02 The panic cycle

A harmless body sensation is read as danger, so fear spikes, so the body reacts harder, so the sensation grows, and the loop tightens. Seeing the cycle clearly is what takes the terror out of it, because the fear, not the sensation, is the fuel.

03 What genuinely helps

- Learning that panic is a false alarm, not a threat
- Not fighting or fleeing: letting the wave crest and fall
- Slow breathing to ease the physical surge
- CBT to change the catastrophic interpretation

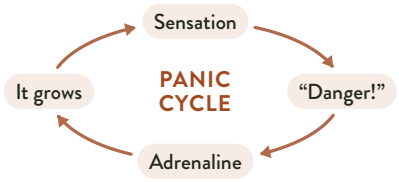
A PRACTICAL STORY

From "something is wrong" to riding out the wave



THE PATTERN

The panic cycle



A sensation is misread as danger, which amplifies it. Breaking the loop starts with the interpretation.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Ride the wave

1. "This is panic, not dangerous."
2. Breathe out slowly, and wait
3. Let it rise, peak and fall

It always passes.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If panic attacks recur, or you start avoiding places for fear of one, a psychologist can help you break the cycle, often in a short course of sessions.

DID YOU KNOW?

The word panic comes from Pan, the Greek god of the wild, whose sudden shouts were said to fill travellers with terror.

Oxford English Dictionary

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

Panic feeds on the fear of panic. Understand the loop, and you can defuse it.

Need support right now? Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

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