

Surfing the Wave of a Panic Attack

Do

- Breathe through it. Inhale slowly and deeply to the count of four. Hold for the count of four. Exhale slowly to the count of four.
- Reassure yourself that life will go on. The feeling of panic is real, but the danger is not. There is nothing life-threatening happening here.
- Stay present. Use your senses to identify object that are real: 5 things you can see; 4 things you can touch; 3 things you can hear; 2 things you can smell; 1 thing you can taste.
- Use progressive relaxation. Slow your body down and your mind will follow. Consciously tense and relax one muscle at a time until your whole body is relaxed.
- Get some gentle exercise. Even 10 minutes of movement lowers stress and anxiety. Go for a gentle walk, do some slow yoga or tai-chi.

Don't

- Don't disaster-ize. Panic feeds on thoughts of what *might* happen. Acknowledge you're suffering anticipatory anxiety and things rarely turn out as badly as you expect.
- Don't let common triggers set you off. Identify if you're feeling hungry, angry, lonely or tired and, if so, take steps to fix it.
- Don't try to fight or control the panic. This doesn't work. Remind yourself this will end within 30 minutes, and despite how it feels, it's not fatal. Ride the wave. You can do it!
- Don't try to relieve the panic with caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol or gambling. The aftereffects of each can be negative and contribute to poor mental health.
- Don't focus on what you can't control or change. Learn to distinguish between what you can and can't control. Letting what you can't control go and focusing on what you can, reduces anxiety

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