



In the Moment: What to Do During a Panic Attack

If you're experiencing a panic attack, know this: **you are not in danger**, even if it feels that way. Panic attacks are intense but temporary surges of fear or distress. The symptoms can feel overwhelming—racing heart, shortness of breath, dizziness, shaking, or fear of losing control—but they *will pass*.

Here are a few steps to help you ground and move through the moment:

1. Name What's Happening

Say to yourself (out loud if you can):

“This is a panic attack. I am safe. My body is reacting to a false alarm.”

Naming it helps you step out of fear and into observation.

2. Use Your Breath

Try this grounding breath:

- Inhale through your nose for **4** counts
- Exhale through your mouth for **6** counts
- Repeat slowly for 1–2 minutes

If breathing feels hard, **just focus on the exhale**—blowing out slowly like you're cooling hot soup.

3. Orient to the Present

Gently look around and say aloud:

- 3 things you can see
- 2 things you can hear
- 1 thing you can feel (e.g., your feet on the ground, a chair supporting you)

This helps your brain reconnect with the here-and-now.

4. Engage Your Body

Try any of these:

- Push your hands into a wall or chair arm
 - Stomp your feet gently on the ground
 - Hold a cool object (like a water bottle or metal key)
 - Rub your arms or hug yourself for calming pressure
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5. Repeat Soothing Words

Choose a phrase like:

- “This will pass.”
 - “I am okay in this moment.”
 - “I’ve gotten through this before.”
Say it with each breath if it helps.
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Optional Support Tools

You can try using one of these:

- Open your grounding PDF or use the 5-4-3-2-1 technique
 - Text or call a safe person to help anchor you
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You’re Not Alone

Panic attacks can feel scary, but you are not broken, and you do not have to face them alone. If they occur frequently, bring it up in our next session. Together, we can understand what’s going on and work with your nervous system at a pace that feels safe.