

In Person and Online Counselling



# WHEN PANIC ATTACKS ME

Understand & Overcoming Panic Attacks

## Panic Attacks

Panic attacks often feel like an overwhelming rush of fear and anxiety, manifesting as sudden, intense episodes that can occur without any apparent reason. This alarming experience can lead individuals to feel as though they are losing control, having a heart attack, or even fearing death in the moment. Often, panic attacks are your body's way of signalling that something deeper has been ignored or neglected—be it emotional stress, unresolved conflicts, or ongoing pressures of daily life. These signals shouldn't be ignored; they are a call to action for self-care and addressing underlying issues.

## Understanding Panic Attacks

Understanding that experiencing panic attacks is not a sign of weakness is crucial. Quite the contrary, they are common in individuals who have, perhaps, been too strong for too long. Such individuals carry on under significant stress and manage substantial burdens without giving themselves the necessary attention and care. This “strength” can lead to an inevitable overload where the body and mind can no longer cope, triggering these intense episodes as a drastic form of communication.

The journey towards overcoming panic attacks often begins with recognizing the need for help—a step that itself takes courage and strength. At Affordable Counselling, therapy typically starts with building a relationship based on trust and understanding in a secure, non-judgemental environment. This setting allows you to explore your experiences with panic attacks in-depth with a therapist who can guide the recovery process sensitively and knowledgeably.

## Cognitive-behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a core strategy used to treat panic attacks. It works on the premise that negative thoughts and behaviours are learned and can therefore be unlearned. CBT focuses on identifying irrational or destructive thoughts and replacing them with more constructive and realistic ones. This process involves recognizing triggers of panic attacks, understanding and restructuring thought patterns that lead to irrational fears, and learning to control the surge of physical symptoms through various techniques.

Typically, a course of 12 to 15 sessions in CBT is found to significantly alleviate symptoms of panic attacks. Each session builds on the last, gradually equipping you with the tools and skills necessary to manage and eventually prevent panic attacks. This structured approach helps break the cycle of anxiety and fear by teaching you how to approach stressful situations differently, reducing the likelihood of a panic response.

## Breathing Technique

Your therapist will also teach you specific techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and relaxation exercises. These are designed to help manage the acute physical symptoms that accompany a panic attack, such as heart palpitations, shortness of breath, and dizziness. By learning to calm the body, you can often prevent a full panic attack or lessen its severity.

## Living a Balanced Life

In therapy, you'll also explore various aspects of your lifestyle that may be contributing to your stress levels and, by extension, your susceptibility to panic attacks. This might include examining your work-life balance, interpersonal relationships, and daily routines to identify stressors. Practical advice and strategies can be developed to address these areas, helping you to build a more balanced and sustainable way of living.

## Addressing Root Causes of Panic Attacks

Therapy is not just about managing symptoms; it's about understanding and addressing the root causes of your panic. This might involve delving into past experiences or unresolved emotions that have contributed to building up stress. By addressing these underlying issues, therapy can help you achieve a more profound sense of personal insight and emotional release, which is essential for long-term recovery.

## Healthy Coping Skills

Therapy also encourages the development of personal resilience and coping strategies that extend beyond the therapy room. Skills such as assertiveness training, conflict resolution, and setting healthy boundaries are often covered. These skills ensure that you are better equipped to handle stressors in the future, reducing the likelihood of recurrence.

## Purpose of Therapy

As you progress through therapy, you should start to notice improvements not just in your ability to handle situations that might previously have triggered a panic attack but also in your overall sense of well-being and confidence. This journey of healing and growth is not just about stopping the panic but about fostering a healthier, more engaged, and fulfilling life.

Remember, the road to recovery from panic attacks is a gradual process of learning, understanding, and application. Each step forward is a move towards regaining control over your life and ensuring a future where panic no longer holds power over your peace of mind. With the right support and commitment, you can turn off the alarm system of panic attacks and move towards a state of calm and stability.

## In Person and Online Therapy

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