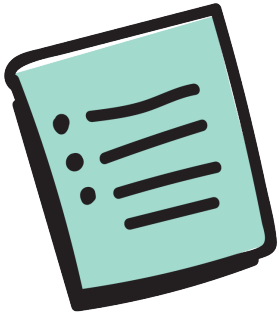


Create a plan for when panic attacks happen

If you know you have panic attacks, it might be a good idea to create a plan to help yourself, should you start to feel anxious or panicky. You could write a note to keep in your wallet or record a list on your mobile phone so you always have it with you.



Your list might include some reassuring thoughts like this:

- I'm safe. There's no danger.
- I can get through this.
- This situation .. (you could add in a feared situation like being in the supermarket).. can't hurt me and the anxiety will pass. The next time I deal with this situation it will feel easier.'
- If I feel dizzy and lightheaded it's really a symptom of anxiety and not a sign that I'm about to faint.

Make up your own list that will help you. Reading or listening to your own words will help you remember that you've coped in situations where you've felt panicky before.

Managing your breathing is also really important. Panic attacks can seem to happen suddenly and without any warning. In reality, it's likely that you've been feeling anxious before it happened and this has affected your breathing. When someone feels anxious they can start to over-breathe and take in too much oxygen. A lower level of carbon dioxide reduces blood flow to the brain which can trigger the symptoms of anxiety.

Practise this **breathing technique** and keep it with you so you've always got a reminder of an exercise that can slow down your breathing and help you to feel calmer.

- Take a breath in (through your nose) for two seconds.
- Hold the breath for two seconds.
- Release the breath (through your nose) taking six seconds.
- Pause slightly and breathe in again.

You can also watch the diaphragmatic breathing animation on MindWell. If you practise this exercise regularly it should become easier to remember to breathe like this when you're feeling anxious.

Go to www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/relaxation-breathing

With practice it's possible to recognise that you're stressed and starting to feel panic attack symptoms coming on. This means you can start using some of these techniques to help you feel calmer, which could stop the symptoms from turning into a full panic attack.