

At The Hitchin Hypnotherapy Practice, we offer clients relief from a wide range of emotional and psychological issues including 'anxiety' or 'panic' attacks.

So what is a panic attack?

Panic attacks are symptoms of panic disorder in which the sufferer has an overwhelming feeling of fear, apprehension and anxiety. They can also cause physical symptoms, including sweating, shaking, nausea, a problem swallowing and heart palpitations.

If you are a sufferer you may be a little comforted to know that they are not uncommon, affecting around 10% of people in the UK at some time in their lives. Around 1% have panic disorder which is recurring panic attacks for no obvious reason and often develops after the age of 20; it's more common in women.

What causes panic attacks?

The underlying cause of panic attacks and panic disorder is not clear, but there is an association with phobias, such as school phobia or agoraphobia, as well as with depression, alcohol or cigarette abuse, suicide risk, and seasonal affective disorder (SAD) - a type of depression that generally occurs during winter months.

The sudden feeling of terror or doom often brings on uncontrollable, rapid, shallow breathing (hyperventilation). This in itself can cause many of the other physical symptoms by upsetting the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the bloodstream.

Panic disorder may begin after a serious illness or accident, the death of a close friend, separation from family, the birth of a baby. Attacks may also accompany the use of mind-altering drugs. Most often, however, a panic attack seems to come "out of the blue" and can even happen during sleep.

What are the symptoms of a panic attack?

If you have four or more of the following symptoms, you may be having a panic attack:

- Sudden high level of anxiety - with or without an identified reason e.g. feeling vulnerable
- Heart racing/palpitations
- Feeling hot and sweating
- Shaking
- A 'smothering' sensation
- A feeling of choking / lump in the throat
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea
- Dizziness or faintness
- A sense of unreality – like not being in your own body at that time
- A fear of dying
- Numbness or tingling

An isolated panic attack, while extremely unpleasant, is not uncommon or life-threatening. When you have a panic attack, you may think you're having a heart attack. The chest pain of a panic attack usually stays in the mid-chest area (the pain of a heart attack commonly moves toward the left arm, which can feel like a tonne weight). It is often accompanied by rapid breathing, rapid heartbeat, and fear. A panic attack generally lasts only a few minutes, comes on suddenly, follows the same physiological pattern, leaves suddenly, and leaves the sufferer exhausted

However, most people having a panic attack have had them before, triggered by a similar event or situation.

The good news for sufferers is that because panic attacks follow a common pattern of cognitive (thought) and physiological (bodily) symptoms, and because patterns can be interrupted, panic attacks can often be eliminated using therapeutic techniques. Here at The Hitchin Hypnotherapy we use an NLP technique which involves the sufferer to be able to associate with the feelings at the different stages of their panic attacks, and the therapist scrambling all the symptoms so that the stimulus (e.g. feeling vulnerable) can no longer result in the normal panic responses within the body and mind. We have had amazing results using the NLP Scrambling technique to treat panic attacks, hot flushes for menopausal women, obsessive compulsive disorder, and generally reduce feelings of anxiety. If you would like to take advantage of our 30-45 minute consultation, which is free of charge, and without obligation to go ahead with therapy, why not give us a ring?

For further information and to find out how The Hitchin Hypnotherapy Practice may be able to help you, please contact:

Karen Kelsey on 07805 792191
or email karen@kelsey-coaching.co.uk
Poppyfields, Little Lane, Pirton SG5 3QR
www.hitchinhypnotherapy.co.uk
Facebook /HitchinHypnotherapy
Twitter: @hitchinhypno