

WHAT IS.....

PANIC

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

Arming you with the knowledge and understanding of the little things

What is Panic?

It is really natural for all of us to experience anxiety and panic at certain times due to the curve balls of life. It's how we are wired to respond to a stressful or dangerous situation.

But panic disorder is when someone regularly experiences sudden attacks of panic or fear which can be quite debilitating in the moment. Panic attacks can be very frightening for the individual experiencing them, and when they occur, can feel for the individual like they are losing control, having a heart attack or even dying.

Why do we experience panic?

Panic attacks occur because the threat system has been triggered off by something and the 'fight/flight/freeze' response kicks into play. Therefore, hormones are released which make our heart beat faster and we are put in a state of high alert. Due to the fact that panic attacks can be triggered for no reason, this can mean that an attack can happen when we really don't need or want it, as the threat system firing in that moment is not helpful or useful for us.

Panic attacks can also occur as a result of a general 'build up' of our threat system being online too much such as when we have ongoing stress and stressors in our lives. Remember to a certain extent, an attack has come about because of how our brain is wired and our body is designed as it thinks you are in danger. So it is not someone's fault.

Equally, we can also bring on a panic attack by worrying about the initial symptoms of stress and panicking that we might have a panic attack...which in itself then brings it on.

Symptoms

Panic attacks typically begin suddenly and without warning so can happen at any time e.g. when we are driving, talking to someone, when we are in the middle of a meeting. They can happen occasionally, or they may occur frequently. One of the most debilitating things about panic attacks is the intense fear around having one. Therefore people can end up avoiding situations where they believe they might be triggered. Which can really interfere with everyday life.

Panic attacks have many variations, but symptoms usually peak within minutes. You may feel fatigued and worn out after a panic attack subsides.

Panic attacks typically include some of these signs or symptoms:

- Sense of impending doom or danger
- Fear of loss of control or death
- Rapid, pounding heart rate
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Shortness of breath or tightness in your throat
- Chills
- Hot flashes
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramping
- Chest pain
- Headache
- Dizziness, light-headedness or faintness
- Numbness or tingling sensation
- Feeling of unreality or detachment