

PANIC ATTACKS



UNCOMMON PPL



WHY HAVE I WRITTEN THIS INSIDER GUIDE?



MANY OF US KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED PANIC ATTACKS, WHETHER IT'S A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OR THAT OF A CLOSE FRIEND. I INTEND TO SHARE THE STRATEGIES I HAVE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS FROM MY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER COURSE, DRAWING FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCES, TO SUPPORT OTHERS WITH DIGNITY AND IN A NON-JUDGMENTAL MANNER IF WE FIND OURSELVES IN SUCH SITUATIONS.

AGENDA

**WHAT IS A PANIC
ATTACK**

**SYMPTOMS,
CAUSES AND RISK
FACTORS OF
PANIC ATTACKS**

**STRATEGIES FOR
PANIC ATTACKS**

SIGNPOSTING



WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK

Panic attacks, while intense, are a common experience. They are sudden episodes of fear that often peak within ten minutes and can last longer. They are an exaggerated version of the body's normal response to stress, danger, or excitement. It's important to remember that everyone, at some point, experiences feelings of anxiety and panic. However, for those with panic disorder, these episodes happen more frequently and can occur without any clear trigger.

CAUSES

The exact causes of panic attacks and panic disorder are unclear, but several factors may contribute:

Genetics: A family history of anxiety disorders can increase risk.

Major Stress: Significant life events may trigger attacks.

Sensitivity: A temperament prone to stress or negative emotions can heighten vulnerability.

Brain Function Changes: Alterations in how specific brain areas function may play a role.

RISK FACTORS

Excessive caffeine intake

A family history of panic attacks or panic disorder

Major life stressors, such as the death or serious illness of a loved one

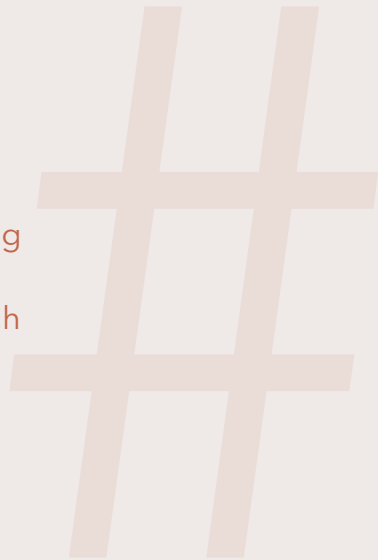
Traumatic events, such as sexual assault or serious accidents

Significant life changes, such as divorce or the arrival of a new baby

SYMPTOMS OF PANIC ATTACKS DURING A PANIC ATTACK, INDIVIDUALS MAY EXPERIENCE A VARIETY OF SYMPTOMS, INCLUDING:



- Racing heartbeat
- Dizziness or faintness-
- Excessive sweating
- Nausea or stomach discomfort
- Chest pain or tightness



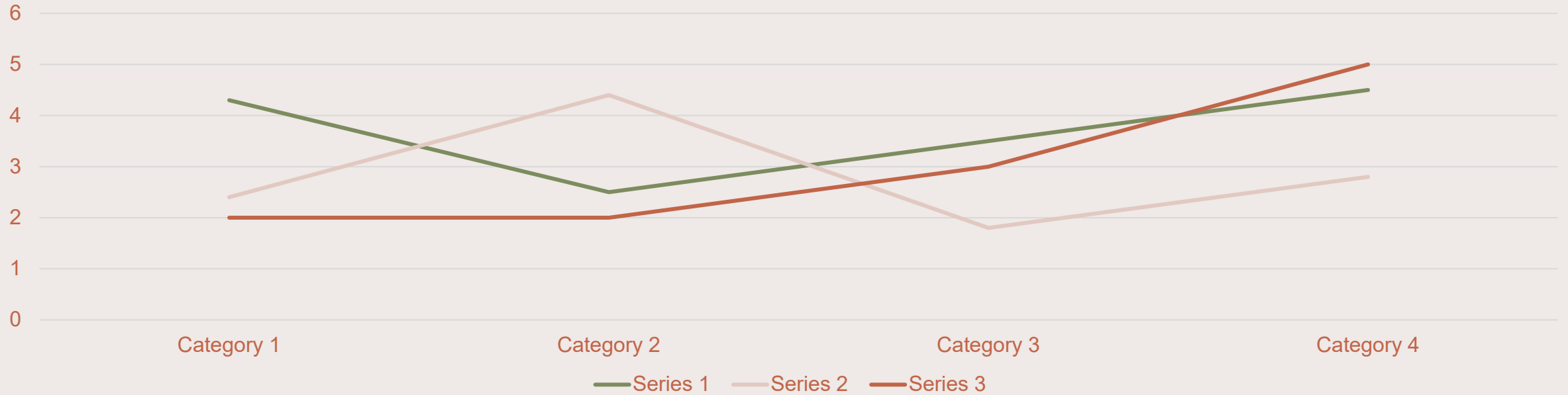
- Shortness of breath
- Trembling or shaking
- Hot flushes or chills
- A choking sensation
- Tingling or numbness



- Dry mouth
- Overwhelming dread or fear
- A feeling of losing control
- A sense of disconnection from reality or oneself

[NHS](#)

PANIC ATTACK OVERVIEW



2-3%

2-3% of adults in the UK experience panic disorder at some point in their lives.

Kessler, R. C., et al. (2005).

60%

60% of individuals with panic disorder may also have other mental health conditions, such as depression or generalised anxiety disorder.

Brown, T. A., et al. (2001)

200%

Women are 200% more likely than men to experience panic disorders and panic attacks

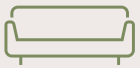
Barlow, D. H., et al. (2000)

10%

Research indicates that up to 10% of patients visiting emergency rooms for chest pain may be experiencing panic attacks rather than a heart attack.

Duncan, H. L., & Ritchie, E. (2019)

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE DURING A PANIC ATTACK IF YOU ARE WITH SOMEONE EXPERIENCING A PANIC ATTACK, CONSIDER THESE SUPPORTIVE STEPS:



ENCOURAGE TO SIT DOWN

If you have assessed the situation and determined it is a panic attack, gently encourage the person and guide them to a comfortable standing or seating position. If you're not sure it's a panic attack, you shouldn't delay seeking medical help and should always call the emergency services.

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MAKE EYE CONTACT

Stand in front of them and hold their hand if appropriate to offer reassurance. Maintaining eye contact can help create a connection and convey your presence.



AVOID DISMISSIVE COMMENTS

Phrases like "calm down" can be unhelpful. Focus on being present and supportive. Set aside your own perspective and approach the situation from their point of view. Acknowledge that their feelings of terror are valid and very real. Reassure them that they are safe and encourage a sense of calm in your demeanour.



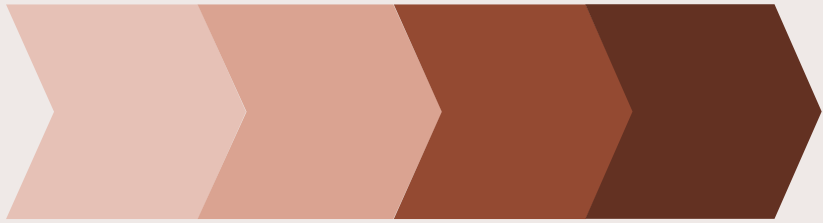
USE BREATHING EXERCISES

Breathe together and guide them to inhale slowly for a count of four, hold their breath for four, exhale for four, and then hold again for four. Repeat this cycle several times to help regulate their breathing.

[MHFA ENGLAND](#)

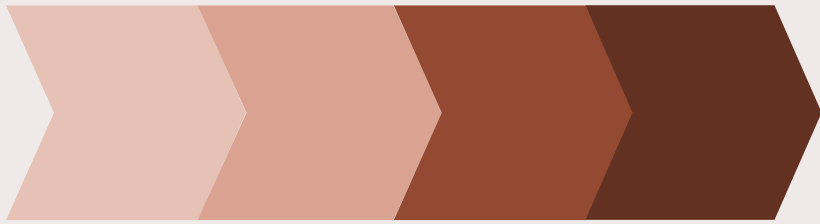
ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING PANIC ATTACKS WHEN NO ONE ELSE IS AROUND.

CONSIDER INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TECHNIQUES:



- The 333 Rule
- Name three things you see
- Identify three sounds you hear
- Move three parts of your body
- This simple yet effective technique can help you regain control and feel more present in the moment.

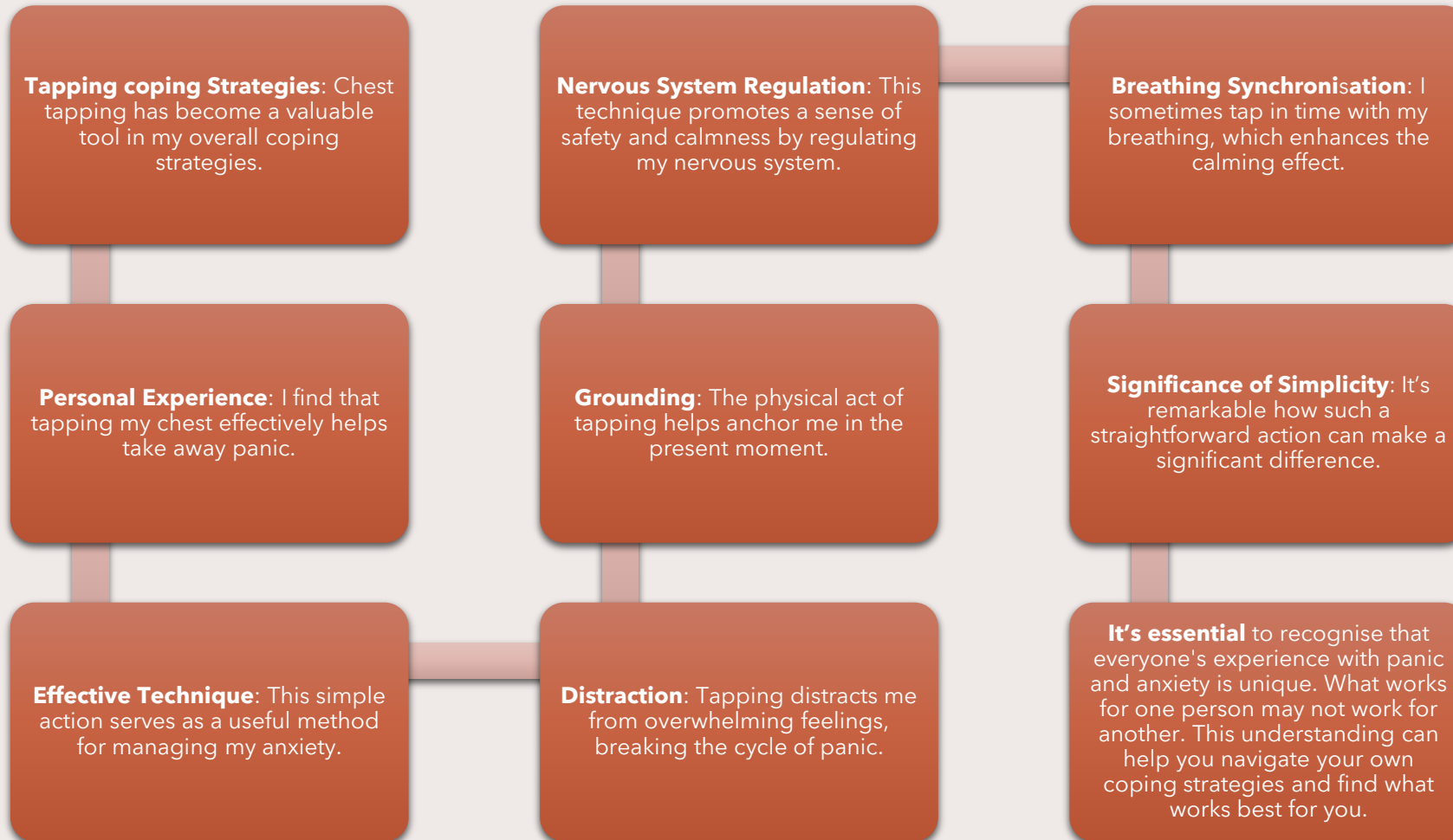
ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING PANIC ATTACKS CONSIDER INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TECHNIQUES:



- Breathing Focus: Concentrate on slowly breathing in and out while counting to five.
- Stamping: Some find that stamping their feet helps regulate breathing.-
- Sensory Focus: Engage your senses by tasting mint-flavoured sweets or touching something soft.
- Grounding Techniques: Use grounding techniques to regain control, especially if you experience dissociation during panic attacks.

CHEST TAPPING:

- GENTLY TAP YOUR CHEST TO HELP MANAGE ANXIETY AND GROUND YOURSELF IN THE PRESENT MOMENT.
- TRY TAPPING IN SYNC WITH YOUR BREATHING FOR A CALMING EFFECT.



SIGNPOSTING

WHAT IS SIGNPOSTING?

EFFECTIVE SIGNPOSTING INVOLVES RECEIVING TIMELY INFORMATION AND BEING DIRECTED TO APPROPRIATE SERVICES BY SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS YOUR NEEDS AND THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE. FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN A PARTICULAR PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION, THE PERSON HELPING YOU CAN OFFER RELEVANT DETAILS AND GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ACCESS THAT SUPPORT.



Mind:

Offers information and support for mental health issues, including anxiety.



Samaritans:

Provides a listening ear for anyone in distress, available 24/7.



Anxiety UK:

Supports those affected by anxiety and panic attacks with resources and advice.



No Panic:

Specialises in helping people with panic attacks and anxiety through helplines and support groups.



Rethink Mental Illness:

Offers advice and support for various mental health issues, including anxiety.



British Anxiety Association:

Provides information and resources for anxiety disorders. These organisations can be helpful in providing support and information on managing panic attacks.

THANK

YOU

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