

## Anxiety/Panic Attacks

- Anxiety is 100% normal; it is our body's natural response to danger. Therefore, the goal is to learn to manage anxiety, not eliminate it.
- Anxiety can become a problem when your body tells you it is in danger when there is no danger present.
- If you continue to avoid something that causes you anxiety, you allow the fear to grow. With self-help strategies, you can learn to manage your anxiety in any situation.

### Get the Facts!

Panic attacks will **NOT** cause you to...

**Faint:** Fainting is caused by a sudden and significant drop in blood pressure. When you're anxious, your blood pressure rises and it is not likely that you will faint.

**Lose Control/Last forever:** It may feel like you are out of control, but you are still behaving in ways that show you are in control. This is a temporary response, it will not last forever! Use your relaxation techniques and it will go away even faster.

**Go Crazy:** Panic attacks do not cause people to "go crazy." No one has ever gone crazy from experiencing a panic attack.

**Die:** You are not having a heart attack and you are not suffocating. The chest pain you experience during a panic attack is the result of muscle tension (concentrate on relaxing your muscles). The feeling of not getting enough air is due to shallow breathing (concentrate on taking slow, deep breaths).

### Stay **AWARE**

**A:** Accept the anxiety. Do not try to fight it.

**W:** Watch the anxiety. Imagine you are outside of your body and you are just observing it.

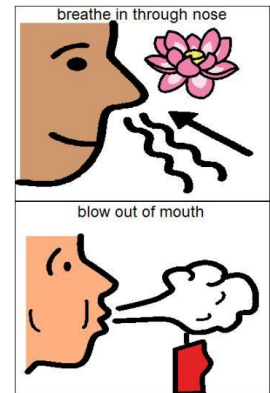
**A:** "Act normal." Carry on as if nothing is happening and use your strategies to calm your body.

**R:** Repeat the above steps until you start to relax again.

**E:** Expect the best- The more familiar you become with your strategies the quicker it will go away.

## Self –Help Strategies for Anxiety

- **Deep Breathing:** Take slow, regular breaths and concentrate on the air going into and out of your body.
  - Take a slow breath in through your nose, breathing into your “belly” for about 4 seconds
  - Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds
  - Exhale slowly through the mouth for about 4 seconds
  - Repeat



- **Muscle Relaxation:** Focus on tensing and then relaxing one muscle group at a time.
  - Focus on and notice the difference between the feeling of tension and relaxation in your body. Once you learn the difference it will become easier for you to relax your body.

- **Guided Imagery:** Close your eyes and imagine you are in your safe place. Think about what you can see, smell, touch, hear, and taste.

- **Realistic Thinking:** To become more aware of your specific fears, identify your thoughts whenever you feel anxious or feel an urge to avoid or escape a situation.



- What am I afraid will happen?
- How many times have I had this thought when experiencing anxiety?
- How many times has it actually happened?
- How likely is it that it will really happen?
- Is this a fear or is this reality?

- **Distract Your Mind**

- Positive Self Talk: “You are a good person going through a hard time. You’ll get through this.”
- Count backwards from 20
- Color or Draw
- Go over the alphabet backwards and name an animal for each letter. Name a positive characteristic about yourself for each letter.
- Letter name game: Go through the alphabet and identify 2 names, a place to live, and an item
  - Ex: A my name is Ashley, my best friend’s name is Adam, we live in Alaska and we sell Apples

