

Panic Disorder **Workbook**

"Panic attacks may strike like unexpected storms, but in their

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WHAT IS PANIC DISORDER?

“

REMEMBER, ANXIETY ARRIVES IN WAVES. EVERY NOW AND THEN, A REALLY BIG WAVE WILL COME (A.K.A. A PANIC ATTACK), BUT IF YOU DON'T RESPOND CORRECTLY IN THOSE FIRST FEW MOMENTS, THE FEAR CAN SWAMP YOU, LEAVING YOU SHAKEN AND TERRIFIED OF THE NEXT ONE. ”

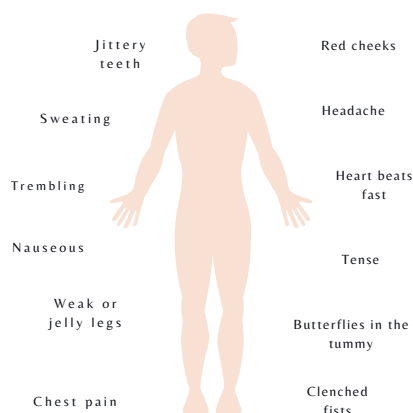


WHAT IS PANIC DISORDER?

A panic attack —also called an “anxiety attack”— “is an abrupt surge of intense fear or intense discomfort that reaches a peak within minutes, and during which time four (or more) of the following symptoms occur;

1. Palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate.
2. Sweating.
3. Trembling or shaking.
4. Sensations of shortness of breath or smothering.
5. Feelings of choking.
6. Chest pain or discomfort.
7. Nausea or abdominal distress.
8. Feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed, or faint.
9. Chills or heat sensations.
10. Paresthesias (numbness or tingling sensations).
11. Derealization (feelings of unreality)
12. Depersonalization (being detached from oneself).
13. Fear of losing control or “going crazy.”
14. Fear of dying.

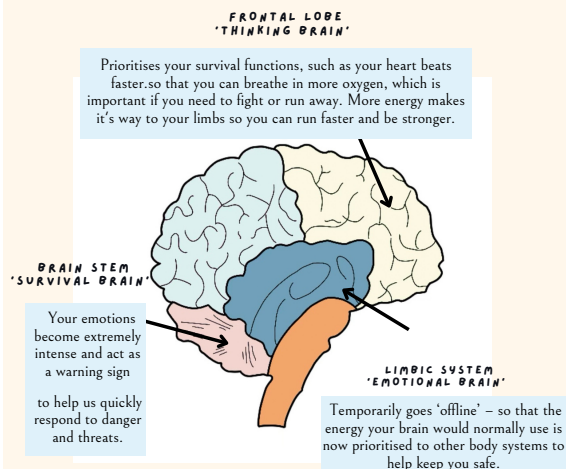
PANIC IN YOUR BODY



Everyone experiences feelings of anxiety and panic at certain times. It's a natural response to stressful or dangerous situations. But someone with panic disorder has feelings of anxiety, stress, and panic regularly and at any time, often for no apparent reason. Additionally, not everyone who has a panic attack has a panic disorder, but having recurring panic attacks is a symptom of panic disorder.

HAVING PANIC DISORDER IS NOT YOUR FAULT AND IT IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.

PANIC INSIDE THE BRAIN



WHAT CAUSES PANIC DISORDER?

- Someone in your family has it (though it's not clear how much of that is because of your genes or the environment you grew up in)
- High levels of stress
- Frequent negative feelings or trouble dealing with negative emotions
- People with panic disorder often have other people in their family who have anxiety or depression. Research suggests there may be a genetic factor.
- Some medical conditions are associated with panic disorder. These include cardiac arrhythmias, hyperthyroidism, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and irritable bowel syndrome.
- Childhood circumstances: Some people grew up in an environment that failed to teach them that the world is a safe place overall.
- Catastrophic thinking - Another theory is that people who experience panic attacks tend to focus on minor physical symptoms and interpret them in a catastrophic way. This triggers a nervous system response that causes the panic attack.
- Genetics: Some people are born with a genetic predisposition to panic attacks under the right circumstances.

UNDERSTANDING PANIC ATTACKS

Panic attacks are characterized by sudden and intense feelings of fear, dread, or impending doom. They usually reach their peak within minutes and typically last for around 10 to 30 minutes. Panic attacks can occur without warning or may be triggered by specific situations, events, or even a looming sense of apprehension.

The following are some key points about panic attacks:

Relationship with Anxiety:

1

Panic attacks are closely linked to anxiety disorders, particularly panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. People experiencing panic attacks often have heightened vigilance to stress and a constant fear of having another attack. Furthermore, the fear of having a panic attack can lead to a cyclical pattern of anxiety, triggering even more panic attacks.

Common Symptoms:

2

Symptoms experienced during a panic attack can vary from person to person. However, common physical symptoms include rapid heart rate, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, chest pain or discomfort, dizziness, and feelings of choking. Psychological symptoms may include fear of losing control, feeling detached from reality, or having a sense of impending death.

"Panic attacks may strike like unexpected storms, but in their midst lies the opportunity to untangle the thunderous clouds and find the calm within ourselves."

DANIEL'S STORY

I never thought I would be the type of person to have panic attacks. Growing up, I was always confident and outgoing, never allowing fear to hold me back. But then, during my sophomore year of high school, everything changed.

It started one day in math class. We were taking a test, and suddenly, without any warning, I started feeling a tightness in my chest. My heart began to race, making it difficult to focus on anything else. I tried to take deep breaths, but the panic only grew stronger. Thoughts of impending doom flooded my mind. It was as if my body and mind were no longer under my control.

Since that day, panic attacks became a regular occurrence in my life. They even started happening outside of school, at the most random moments. Each time, it felt like my world was spinning out of control. My heart would race uncontrollably, and a cold sweat would break out all over me. The walls would close in, and I felt like I couldn't escape the overwhelming wave of fear washing over me.

Realizing that I needed help, I reached out to a therapist. In therapy, I discovered healthy coping techniques that would help me manage my panic attacks and reduce my overall anxiety.

One of the first things I learned was the power of self-care. Taking care of myself became my top priority. I made sure to give myself time each day for activities that brought me joy and relaxation. Whether it was going for a run or listening to my favorite music, I found that allowing myself moments to unwind and recharge greatly helped in managing my anxiety.

DANIEL'S STORY

Another technique that I found helped me was thought challenging. I had always been a bit of a perfectionist, so whenever I made a mistake or encountered a challenging situation, the panic would kick in. Through therapy, I started questioning my negative thoughts and examining their accuracy. This process allowed me to challenge the belief that everything had to be perfect or disastrous. I learned to reframe my thoughts, reminding myself that making mistakes was a normal part of life and not a catastrophic event.

Mindful breathing also played a significant role in my journey to overcoming panic attacks. I learned to practice deep breathing exercises whenever I felt anxiety creeping in. Taking long, slow breaths and focusing my attention on the sensation of my breath entering and leaving my body helped ground me in the present moment. It allowed me to calm my racing heart and bring my mind back to a state of balance.

Implementing these healthy coping techniques wasn't easy at first. It took time and practice to make them a habit. There were still moments when panic would try to take hold, but armed with my new tools, I fought back. And little by little, I began to regain control over my life.

Today, I am proud to say that panic attacks no longer define me. I am stronger and more resilient as a result of facing my fears head-on. Through my journey, I have learned that seeking help is not a sign of weakness, but rather a testament to our strength and willingness to grow.

If you find yourself struggling with panic attacks or anxiety, know that there is hope. Self-care, thought challenging, and mindful breathing are just a few of the many tools that can help you regain control and live a fulfilling life. Remember, you are not alone, and seeking help is a courageous step towards finding peace within yourself.

MY STORY

Handwriting practice area consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines.



ALL ABOUT ME

NAME _____ NICKNAME _____

STAR SIGN _____ D.O.B _____

FAVOURITE FOODS

● _____

● _____

● _____

FAVORITE SONGS

● _____

● _____

● _____

IF I WON A MILLION DOLLARS, WHAT WOULD I DO WITH IT?

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE ME

● _____

● _____

● _____

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO

● _____

● _____

● _____

A QUOTE THAT INSPIRES ME IS



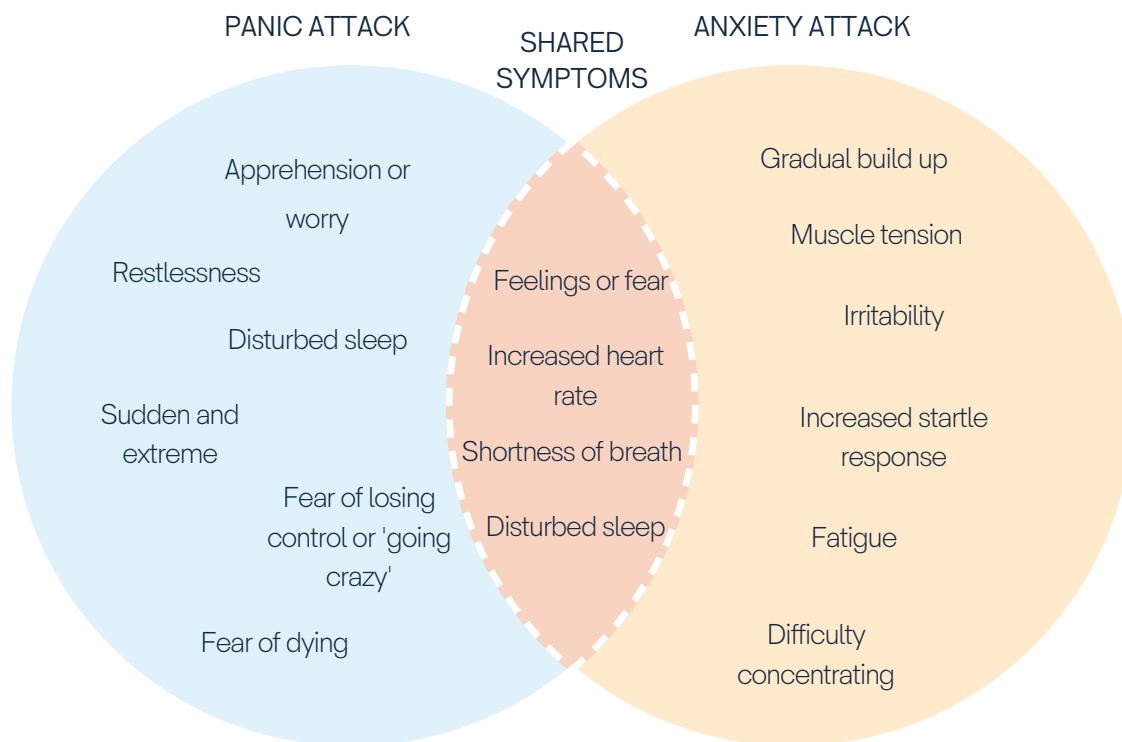


ANXIETY VS PANIC ATTACKS

I HAVE ANXIETY ATTACKS, DOES THAT MEAN I HAVE PANIC DISORDER?

A worry is a feeling of unease, fear, or nervousness when thinking about unpleasant things. It is a type of thinking, often about something that might happen in the future, leaving you feeling frightened, nervous, or anxious.

An anxiety attack tends to occur in response to certain stressors and may build gradually; panic attacks occur suddenly and unexpectedly and typically only last for a few minutes. Thus, Panic attacks are often more intense and can occur with or without a trigger, while anxiety attacks are a response to a perceived threat. Some people even experience panic attacks in the middle of the night, waking them from sleep.



In summary, the main differences between panic attacks and anxiety attacks are related to two key areas:

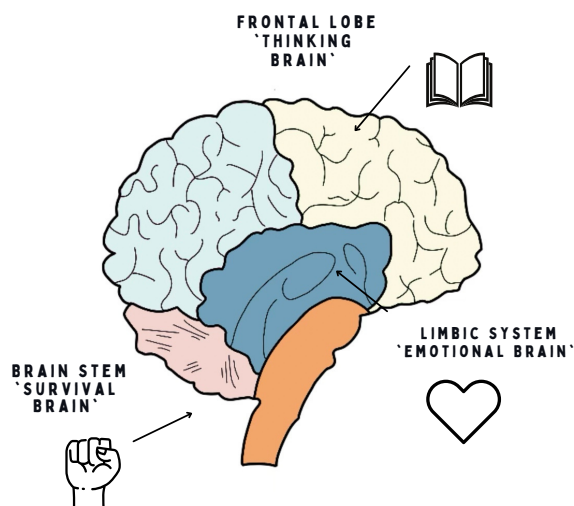
- The intensity of the symptoms – panic attacks symptoms tend to be much more intense and severe than anxiety attack symptoms
- The length of time the main symptoms occur over – panic attacks tend to start abruptly and finish quickly (usually peaking after around 10 minutes). Anxiety can build and persist for months on end.



SURVIVAL MODE OF WORRY

“THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE IS DESIGNED TO AID SURVIVAL IN DANGEROUS OR THREATENING SITUATIONS.”

Without the ability to feel worried, humans wouldn't have survived. Back in the caveman days, when we were hunters and gatherers, worry and stress would alert us to potential life-threatening dangers, such as being face-to-face with a saber-tooth tiger. In the caveman days, the 'fight or flight' mode kept them alive, as they would either dash away from the tiger or fight it for survival. In the modern world, this response can still serve us well and help us survive dangerous situations, such as quickly responding to a car coming your way on the footpath by running out of its way.



When we feel a sense of potential danger and fear, our body instinctively goes into protective mode to keep us safe, and this fear response starts in the part of the brain called the amygdala. The amygdala activates the fight or flight response, assesses the emotional significance of things that happen in our environment, and decides whether or not something is a threat to you.

So let's say that your amygdala decides that the spider creeping towards you is dangerous to you; it will initiate your body's fight or flight response as a way of helping you respond to that threat.

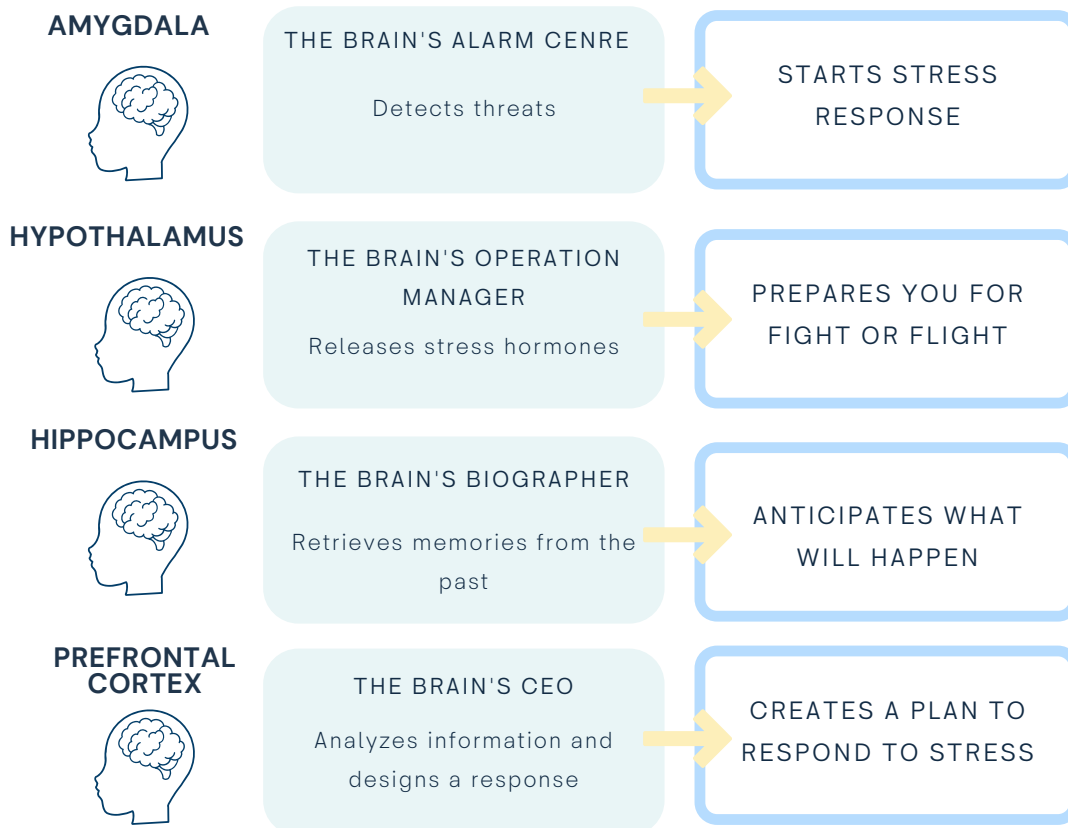
The amygdala automatically sends a signal to another part of the brain called the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus activates the pituitary gland, which then activates the adrenal gland. And finally, the adrenal gland secretes the hormones cortisol, noradrenaline, and adrenaline, which triggers fear in the fight or flight response.



THE BODIES RESPONSE TO PANIC

Releasing these chemicals helps prepare the body for physical action, such as muscles becoming tenser, the heart pounding faster, and our pupils becoming more dilated, allowing us to see better. We get a rush of more energy, enabling us to respond quickly to dangerous situations.

Many people understand that worries, panic, and anxiety have an impact on us both mentally and emotionally. However, it is also essential to make the connection between how you feel physically in these anxious moments. All of these changes produced by the fight or flight response are healthy and needed if there is a real danger. They help you to respond successfully if you have any threat that you might encounter. However, when the response continues and occurs without real risk, it creates anxiety.





UNDERSTANDING TRIGGERS

TRIGGER:

Maximun Fear



SYMPTOMS CHECKLIST

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Dizziness | ☐ Pins and needles.' |
| ☐ Heart beats fast | ☐ feeling lightheaded |
| ☐ Nausea | ☐ trembling |
| ☐ Tense muscles | ☐ feeling very thirsty |
| ☐ Weak legs | ☐ Tightness in chest |
| ☐ Butterflies in stomach | ☐ Feeling faint |
| ☐ Headaches | ☐ A feeling of losing control |
| ☐ Clenched fists | ☐ Feeling of dying |
| ☐ Sweating | |

THOUGHTS:

BEHAVIOR:



TRIGGER DIARY

Use this diary to spot the pattern of your anxious triggers by identifying the impact it had on your thoughts, feelings and behavior.

THOUGHT	FEELING	BEHAVIOR	RESULT/ CONSEQUENCE



MY WORRIES

Everybody feels worried or anxious from time to time. For example, maybe you felt concerned when you had to get a needle at the doctor's office, or perhaps you were worried when you started school for the first time because you didn't know anyone. It is even completely normal to feel worried if you have to talk in front of many people at your school assembly.

Try and think of times when you felt a little bit anxious.

[illegible]

R.A.I.N

MINDFUL TECHNIQUE



R

Recognize what is happening.

Consciously acknowledge your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are affecting you.

"I have butterflies in my tummy and am feeling nervous."



A

Allow life to be just as it is.

Let your thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations you have recognized be there.

Pause and relax your body.



I

Investigate with kindness.

Pause and ask, what is happening inside me?
How am I experiencing this in my body? Or What am I believing? What does this feeling want from me?



N

Non-identification, you are not the emotion.

Your sense of who you are is not fused with any limiting emotions, sensations, or stories.



COPING STATEMENTS

Anxiety can not hurt me.

Anxiety is just another normal feeling, everybody experiences it.

I can continue with what I was doing, I do not have to be frozen with anxiety.

My over reactive nervous system has kicked in, it will eventually pass.

I can accept the feelings, I do not need to solve it right at this moment.

I am ok.

I am in control of my thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Anxiety is not always a real threat.

I am capable of getting through tough times.

Is this a perceived threat or a real threat?

What evidence do I have that this worry could actually come true?

When I slow down, my brain will start to think properly again.



PAUSE FOR PANIC

P

PAUSE

When you recognise your anxiety symptoms. Immediately STOP everything you are doing.

A

ACTIVITY

Engage in some physical activity until you feel out of breath. Do some star jumps, squats or stomping.

U

UNDERSTAND

Understand that you are safe and that what you are experiencing is a false alarm. There is no immediate danger.

S

SOOTHE

Soothe your body.
Rub both of your hands together quickly, feel the friction between your hands. Can you feel heat? What else can you feel?

E

EXHALE

Trace your finger around each finger on the other hand slowly. Whilst you are tracing breathe in through your nose and out your mouth.

MINDFUL BREATHING

“ ANXIETY CAN BE CONQUERED BY HARNESSING THE STEADY RHYTHM OF YOUR BREATH. THROUGH MINDFUL BREATHING, YOU PAVE THE WAY FOR TRANQUILITY AND REGAIN MASTERY OVER YOUR ANXIOUS MIND. ”



Mindful breathing is a simple yet powerful technique that involves paying attention to your breath and experiencing the present moment without judgment. It is based on the principles of mindfulness, which originates from

ancient meditation practices but has been adapted for today's modern lifestyle. Mindful breathing allows you to redirect your focus from racing thoughts and worries to observing the natural rhythm of your breathing.

The Science behind Mindful Breathing:

Various scientific studies have shed light on the significant benefits of mindful breathing and its impact on anxiety. When we engage in this practice, we activate the body's relaxation response, triggering a decrease in stress hormones like cortisol. Moreover, mindful breathing stimulates the vagus nerve, which plays a vital role in regulating our parasympathetic nervous system, responsible for promoting feelings of relaxation and reducing the "fight-or-flight" response.

How Mindful Breathing Helps to Calm Anxiety:

1. Redirects Attention: When you focus on your breath during anxious moments, you shift your attention away from disturbing thoughts that contribute to anxiety. In turn, this helps break the cycle of worry and fear by bringing your awareness to the present moment

2. Deepens Mind-Body Connection: Mindful breathing enhances our mind-body connection by allowing us to become more attuned to our physical sensations. As you feel your breath flowing in and out, you cultivate a sense of grounding and presence, reducing the intensity of anxiety symptoms.

MINDFUL BREATHING

3. Slows Down Racing Thoughts: Anxiety often leads to a flurry of racing thoughts and an overactive mind. Engaging in mindful breathing encourages slowing down those thoughts and fostering a calmer mental state. As a result, you create space for clarity and a more rational perspective on the situation at hand.

4. Enhances Emotional Regulation: By practicing mindful breathing during moments of anxiety, you cultivate emotional regulation skills. You learn to observe your feelings without becoming overwhelmed or carried away by them, allowing you to respond to triggers with greater composure.

How to Practice Mindful Breathing:

1. Find a quiet space where you can sit comfortably, away from distractions.
2. Close your eyes or maintain a soft gaze.
3. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling slowly through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.
4. Focus your attention on the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body, paying attention to the rise and fall of your chest or the feeling of air passing through your nostrils.
5. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breath without judgment.
6. Continue this practice for a few minutes or longer, gradually extending the duration as you feel more comfortable.

When anxiety strikes, remember that mindful breathing is a powerful tool to help calm the mind and restore balance. By incorporating this practice into your daily routine, you can cultivate a sense of peace and manage anxiety more effectively. Give yourself the opportunity to connect with the present moment, gain control over anxious thoughts, and embrace the transformative power of mindful breathing.

PUTTING THOUGHTS ON TRIAL

THE THOUGHT What am I worrying about?



THE DEFENCE



Do I have any evidence that my thought could be true? – They must be facts.

THE PROSECUTION



Do I have any evidence that my thought could not be true? – They must be facts.

THE JUDGE'S VERDICT



When I look at all of the evidence, can I decide whether my thought is likely to come true or not?



TRIGGER AND COPING SKILLS

TRIGGER	COPING SKILL
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

THE SPIRAL OF A PANIC ATTACK

1. NOTICE A PHYSICAL FEELING

"My legs feel weak and jittery"

2. MISINTERPRET THE FEELING AS DANGER

"I feel that this is concerning or dangerous"

3. FEEL WORRIED AND AFRAID

"I'm starting to feel more worried"

4. THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT SYSTEM IS ACTIVATED

The brain has now been activated to get ready for danger.

5. START TO NOTICE EVEN MORE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Breathing faster, hot, sweaty, heart beating faster.

6. HAVE MORE CATASTROPHIC THOUGHTS

"This is getting worse"
"I'm having a heart attack"

7. PANIC ATTACK

