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Help with Panic Attacks

Fight or Flight Anxiety

In my opinion, the best way to help someone with panic attacks is to provide comprehensive, easy to understand, information which discusses anxiety, panic attacks and agoraphobia.

Many people who first experience a panic attack don't know what is happening to them. Moreover, people who experience a panic attack or panic attacks find it reassuring to know is happening. However, this knowledge (knowing what is happening) can be a real help to the sufferer of panic attacks.

I know how scary it can be, first hand. When I described my symptoms to my doctor, after having my first panic attack, he didn't provide any help or tell me anything other than he was recommending I see a psychologist – no suggestion was given to me that I was possibly suffering a panic attack – from my perspective at the time, I hadn't received any help at all.

While the doctor's referral turned out to be a good recommendation and real help followed, it was really hard going through this period not knowing anything about what was happening to me. Knowing something about the process would have put me somewhat at ease – it would have been a help to me. I initially felt like I was going crazy – you know the thought that I might be suffering a panic attack never crossed my mind.

But unfortunately I was not sure where to turn to for help with my panic attacks (of course at the time though I did not know that I was suffering from panic attacks).

Now in fairness, most medical doctors, at least general practitioners, are not trained in panic attacks, mental health issues, at least in any real depth, and are not prepared to provide any type of counseling, as their training is in only a biological model.

Furthermore most healthcare systems require physicians to work within many time constraints. Obviously this does not help the panic attack sufferer. So dealing with panic attacks in many senses is outside a general practitioner's expertise, hence the recommendation made by my doctor was a good one, help followed because the psychologist I saw really did help me with my panic attacks.

Fortunately, though, awareness of panic attacks is increasing, and now, when patients experience a panic attack, more family doctors will tell them so and can then direct them to the help they need.

Once a physical exam is completed by a medical doctor and this exam rules out any physical causes/issues, then a diagnosis of a panic attack can be made. Medical doctors, psychologists or psychiatrists can make a diagnosis of panic attacks or panic disorder.

Now a doctor can make a diagnosis of a panic attack but more than prescribing medications is necessary. A referral to a mental health professional with experience in panic attacks is very important. This is where the real help begins, in my opinion.

But let's look more at the process of what happens during a panic attack. I think this will be a help to you.

Fight or Flight Anxiety is behind panic attacks

During a panic attack what is known as the "fight or flight response" is activated, even though the individual is not any real danger.

The "fight or flight response" activates the body's mental and physical survival responses which are to "fight" or "flee" from perceived attack, harm or threat.

When this response is initiated chemicals such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol are released into our bloodstream which causes a series of physiological effects. Our heart rate increases, our pupils dilate, and our respiration increases. Blood flow to the brain is reduced which means that our rational thinking is compromised.

This in turn causes our thoughts to race and we are on a heightened alert. We are hypersensitive to things that normally wouldn't bother us.

The whole process is a cyclical because our racing thoughts and worries increase our physiological symptoms and in turn our physiological symptoms increase our racing thoughts and worries.

So this is the process of panic attacks.

While many people suffering from panic attacks feel that they are either having a heart attack or going crazy, it can be help to know that this is not the case; this help comes in the form or reassurance that they are not going crazy but they have been having panic attacks.

Of course if you've experienced a panic attack you are probably concerned about experiencing another. Please be reassured that if you've been diagnosed with panic attacks you are not losing your mind or having a heart attack.

You now understand the physiology process of a panic attack, in particular the fight or flight process and how anxiety and panic attacks result from this process. I hope this is a help with your panic attacks.

The great news, however, is that this information can be used to your advantage, to help you gain control of your anxiety and panic attacks. If you join my free newsletter, I'll discuss exactly how this information can help you with your panic attacks. My continuous newsletter includes an abundance of interesting information and techniques information that can help you with your panic attacks, agoraphobia and anxiety.

For more information about panic attacks, agoraphobia, and anxiety, please sign up for our free newsletter by simply visiting www.PanicAttackRecovery.com and providing your email address in the sign-up box. Subscribers can opt out of our newsletter at any time.

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