

Panic attack cheat sheet.

If you experience someone having a panic attack, or you experience a panic attack yourself, it can be helpful to have a handful of reliable strategies to help you through these difficult moments.

This list offers some ideas for fast and effective interventions.

I recommend practicing some of these so that if you experience someone having a panic attack or you experience a panic attack, you will more easily recall what to do as early as possible.

Obviously you may not be able to do all of these, depending on the situation, but just engaging in one or more can help deflect from an impending panic attack.

It is important to seek medical advice if you have any concerns, and these suggestions are simply first aid self help techniques and not intended to replace any medical intervention.

1	Go outside and move your body to release accumulated adrenaline.
2	Shake to shamanic drum music. As strange as it sounds, this helps excavate stress from the body and synch the brain into a relaxing theta wave pattern.
3	<p>Refocus on sensory information in the present moment:</p> <p>Count five things you can see</p> <p>If you have practiced these previously - do a 4-7-8 breath (breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, breathe out for 8 seconds or as much as you can within these suggestions) then count four things you can touch (i.e. legs, sweater, chair, a book) see "<i>how to practice 4-7-8 breathing</i>" notes.</p> <p>Do a 4-7-8 breath again, then count three things you can hear.</p> <p>Do a 4-7-8 breath, then count two things you can smell (or recall two favourite smells)</p> <p>Do a 4-7-8 breath, then count one thing you can taste (or a favourite taste)</p>
4	Rather than do 4-7-8 breaths, you can do box breaths: inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4 and repeat.
5	Ground your feet and push into a wall with both hands.
6	Count backwards from 100 by 7.
7	Run your hands or feet through something sensory, such as water, sand or Play-Doh.
	Continued overleaf/.....

How to practice 4-7-8 breathing

To practice 4-7-8 breathing, find a place to sit or lie down comfortably. Be sure you practice good posture, especially when starting out. If you're using the technique to fall asleep, lying down is best.

Prepare for the practice by resting the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, right behind your top front teeth. You'll need to keep your tongue in place throughout the practice. It takes practice to keep from moving your tongue when you exhale. Exhaling during 4-7-8 breathing can be easier for some people when they purse their lips.

The following steps should all be carried out in the cycle of one breath:

1. First, let your lips part. Make a whooshing sound, exhaling completely through your mouth.
2. Next, close your lips, inhaling silently through your nose as you count to four in your head.
3. Then, for seven seconds, hold your breath.
4. Make another whooshing exhale from your mouth for eight seconds.

When you inhale again, you initiate a new cycle of breath. Practice this pattern for four full breaths.

The held breath (for seven seconds) is the most critical part of this practice. It's also recommended that you only practice 4-7-8 breathing for four breaths when you're first starting out. You can gradually work your way up to eight full breaths.

This breathing technique shouldn't be practiced in a setting where you're not prepared to fully relax. While it doesn't necessarily have to be used for falling asleep, it can still put the practitioner into a state of deep relaxation. Make sure you don't need to be fully alert immediately after practicing your breathing cycles.