

Three Steps to Handle Anxiety/Panic Attacks



Learn How to Rewrite the Ending

1.

Use a low calm voice that is not a doggy voice nor implies they're crazy or a freak. Speak to them as you would an adult in crisis, with empathy but without condescension. Anxiety and panic attacks are not necessarily psychosomatic, that is there may be some or even full validity to their fears. Even so, thinking through a situation is better done without a preoccupied prefrontal cortex therefore even in the face of a legitimate fear, reducing the attack is warranted. If the sufferer does not have a dissociative disorder, there is likely, at least partial, validity to their fears.

The purpose of this step is to reduce their norepinephrine and hypervigilance through mirror neurons. Emotions are contagious but not all are equally contagious, the purpose is to transfer your calmness to them and assure them that you're safe. Focus primarily on making them feel safe rather than identifying the issue or attempting to convince them the issue is crazy. If it is, usually partially, psychosomatic then they'll be embarrassed by the episode when they sober up so avoid trying to convince them of "reality" until the next step.

2.

Identify the fear and talk through it. At this step, ask about the source of the fear and talk through the details of it. Get a full grasp of the situation. Generally, the psychosomatic or otherwise inaccurate elements of an anxiety attack owe to a misunderstanding of the situation, an overgeneralization, and things like that so going through the issue in detail will likely reduce fears in that way. Even if the fear is fully legitimate, knowledge of the details gives the sufferer a sense of power since with the knowledge a potential solution is possible to reach. The problem ceases to be an invincible monster and becomes a tangible science. Either way, scientifically analyzing a situation with the same tone in the first step is very helpful.

3.

Finally, if there is anything that can tangibly address the source of the fear, if there is any legitimacy, then that should be done third. Obviously, if a valid fear can be undone then it should be. Ensure all precautions are taken and the sufferer is not triggered or exposed beyond a safe level. Don't go in hastily, rather develop a strategy with other parties to scientifically design a means of deescalating the situation. If the fear is of another party then attempt to arbitrate the situation and treat the other party with empathy and not as a victimizer, if possible. It is tempting to view situations of harm melodramatically when, often, the person behind it may well be innocent of any intentional wrongdoing or have extenuating circumstances that complicate the story.

In situations like that, then the aim should be a mutual understanding, a resolving of extant issues, and an amicable solution where all parties leave the arbitration on, a least, neutral terms and can hopefully greet each other on the street and break bread with each other. Remember, the ultimate goal of arbitration is to emotionally reduce conflicts to the point of neutrality and materially resolve the issue in the most agreeable manner with a third priority of abstract fairness of the results and proceedings. Clearing the air is important both because love is an end in and of itself but also because it helps avert future conflicts. It was the punitive terms of the Treaty of Versailles that gave rise to the Nazis. If one wishes to permanently end a conflict, one does so with light and affection. Hatred only begets pain, ultimately.

In other situations, such as ones involving institutions and bureaucracy or a biological or physical or political situation, find experts in the field and friendly insiders and spend time developing countermeasures. In all cases, time must be spent on crafting a resolution. Do not believe that you can go in without study or strategy. The Dunning-Kruger Effect is a strong cognitive bias and it should be recognized.