



Strategies to Cope with Panic Attacks

Retreat - Distract - Breathe

Retreat

- Retreat (not escape) -
 - Take a break from the provoking situation until you can better handle it.

Distract

- Talk to another person.
- Move around or engage in a physical activity (running, walking, dancing)
- Stay in the present – Focus on external objects/things around you.
- Do a repetitive activity – Count, chew, tap
- Do a simple activity – apply a wet/cold towel on your face, sing
- Do something that requires focused concentration
 - Read, knit, puzzles, write about anxiety, play music or a musical instrument, play with clay, squeeze a stress ball
- Express your anger physically onto an object
 - Punch, run, etc.
 - Anger and anxiety are incompatible reactions. It is impossible to experience both at the same time. Many times anger and panic are stand-in emotions for deep lying anger, frustration or rage
- Experience something immediately pleasurable – hugs, bath, massage

Breathe

- Visualize a comforting person or scene
- Practice Thought Stopping
 - Take a deep breath
 - Shout “Stop!”
 - Replace thought w/ coping statements (i.e. “I am strong enough to get through this.” “This is temporary.” “I have all the skills I need manage my anxiety.” “This isn’t comfortable or pleasant, but I can accept it.” “I can be anxious and still deal with this situation.” “This isn’t an emergency.” “It is o.k. to think slowly about what I need to do.” “This isn’t the worst things that could happen.”)
- Practice Abdominal Breathing
- Practice Positive Coping Statements (i.e. “I can handle this.” “This will pass.” “I will ride this out.”)

Adapted from The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Edmund J. Bourne, PhD.