

# Panic Attacks

## What's Happening & What Helps

### What Is a Panic Attack?

Your body's alarm system going off—fast and intensely—even when you're safe.

### You might notice:

- Racing heart
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness or nausea
- Tight chest
- Feeling like something is "wrong"

### Your body is trying to protect you—but it's misfiring



### If This Is Happening Often

You might notice:

- Feeling like something is "wrong"
- Avoiding places or situations
- Feeling constantly on edge
- Difficulty relaxing or sleeping

You don't have to manage this alone.

### In the Moment: What Can Help

If you're having a panic attack right now:

Slow your breathing <sup>1</sup>

(in through nose, out through mouth) <sup>2</sup>

Remind yourself: "This is a panic response. I am safe." <sup>3</sup>

Ground yourself: name 5 things you can see, 4 you can feel <sup>4</sup>

Let the wave pass instead of fighting it <sup>5</sup>

### What's Happening in Your Brain & Body

Your nervous system is designed to keep you safe—but it doesn't always distinguish between:

- Real danger (external)
- Perceived danger (thoughts, sensations, stress)

Both can activate the same fight–flight–freeze response.

### You notice a sensation

Brain interprets it as danger

Anxiety increases

Body reacts more strongly

The cycle continues

### How Therapy Can Help

Therapy helps break the panic loop at its root—not just manage symptoms.

Panic attacks are common—and treatable. With the right support, you can understand what's happening in your body, feel more in control, and reduce how often panic shows up.

### Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

- Helps shift anxious thought patterns  
<https://www.shantipsychotherapy.ca/psychotherapy-services/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/>

### EMDR Therapy

- Helps your nervous system process deeper triggers  
<https://www.shantipsychotherapy.ca/psychotherapy-services/emdr/>

### Prolonged Exposure Therapy

- Helps reduce fear and avoidance over time
- Work with Maheen:  
<https://www.shantipsychotherapy.ca/psychotherapy-services/emdr/>