

# Coping Mechanisms

In the midst of a panic attack, encourage your child to try the following:

- 5-4-3-2-1 technique:
  - Name 5 things they can see
  - Name 4 things they can touch
  - Name 3 things they can hear
  - Name 2 things they can smell
  - Name 1 thing they can taste
- Breathing exercises:
  - Take a slow deep breath in through the nose
  - Hold it for 2 seconds
  - Breathe out slowly through the mouth
  - Wait 5 seconds and repeat until they are feeling calmer
- Blowing bubbles can also help as a panic-reducing breathing exercise
- Physical exercises:
  - Tense and hold the muscles in the body, as tightly as they can, and then release. Repeat until the body feels more relaxed
  - Pushing a wall away – ask your child to stand in front of a solid wall and tell them to try and push the wall away. As hard as they can, for as long as they can hold it, and when they stop, their muscles will relax. Repeat as necessary.
- Counting:
  - Counting out loud can help, but instead of counting in order, ask your child to repeat numbers, out of order. Brains are used to the familiarity of them being in order, and when they are used out of order, it can confuse the brain long enough to calm them down
- Eating sour sweets – eating sour sweets can make the brain shift its focus from panic to focusing on the senses – this confusion can help ease panic attacks

# Panic Disorder Coping Mechanisms



The Lotus Mental Health

[www.thelotusmentalhealth.org](http://www.thelotusmentalhealth.org)

## What is Panic Disorder?

Panic disorder is a type of anxiety disorder in which the sufferer has panic attacks. Panic attacks are sudden, immediate, and severe reactions to feelings of extreme fear or worry.

These attacks can be a response to something that is about to happen, or it can be a reaction to an event that is due to happen in the future. Once a person has had a panic attack, they can often feel scared of having more panic attacks in other situations where they feel worried.

Everyone worries, and everyone is capable of feeling panic, but for people who have panic attacks, they may start to withdraw from any and all situations that they deem as scary.

## What can you do?

Because of the unpredictability of panic attacks, it can be hugely beneficial for both you and your child(ren) to have coping mechanisms put in place.

It is important to find what works for you and your child, so here are a few examples to get you started...

## Coping Mechanisms

If your child(ren) are feeling anxious, there are things that you can encourage your child to do that can help them. They are:

- Nobody should go through difficult times alone, and this is something that your child needs to learn to understand, because of this, it is important for your child to learn how to open up to people about how they are feeling. A parent, carer, brother, sister, grandparent, auntie, uncle, cousin, a trusted friend, a counsellor – it doesn't matter who, as long as your child feels comfortable talking to someone who they trust, about how they are feeling.
- Encourage your child to get the thoughts that are in their head – out. An effective way that they can do this by keeping a diary. Simply writing down how they are feeling can be really useful. Not only will that work because it helps them put a place for their negative thoughts, but it can also be used as a point of reference for any particular anxiety triggers that they didn't realise they had.
- Writing a letter – this might seem a bit daft, but if they can write letters to themselves, particularly after particular difficult anxiety attacks, they can use the letters to read back and see themselves, through their own words, that they have overcome anxiety attacks in the past, and therefore they know that they are capable of overcoming them.