



vita
health group

What is Panic Disorder?

Name:

Date:



What is a Panic Attack?

A panic attack is a sudden period of intense fear

People experience symptoms such as:



Shortness of breath



Rapid heart rate or palpitations



Sweating



Numbness



Shaking



A feeling that something bad is going to happen

Panic attacks typically lasts for about 30 minutes, but the duration can vary

Panic attacks themselves are not dangerous

Panic attacks can occur due to a number of disorders including panic disorder, agoraphobia, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder or depression

They can be triggered or occur unexpectedly

What is Panic Disorder?



Panic disorder is often described as having unexpected “out of the blue” panic attacks



With the fear and anticipation of further panic attacks



Panic disorder commonly leads to the avoidance of situations where you fear you might have a panic attack



You may have a misinterpretation of anxiety symptoms as something harmful



Broadly, you experience a catastrophic fear that those symptoms might mean you are...

Dying

Losing control

Losing your mind

It is not unusual for someone with Panic disorder to have had only one full panic attack that started their difficulties. Usually this then led to much anticipatory anxiety and anxiety attacks (a less severe form of a panic attack) about the possibility of having another panic attack. However, lots of people do have multiple panic attacks.

Panic disorder can make it difficult for people to do the activities they used to do and therefore

can significantly affect a person’s enjoyment of life and ability to function day to day.

People often feel alone in their struggles, but research tells us that Panic disorder is a common problem that affects around **1% of the adult population**. That means over half a million people in UK struggle with panic disorder.



Panic attacks are pronounced anxiety

We are alive today because of anxiety – it has helped our ancestors survive and that is why we experience it also

Anxiety is:



Triggered by our mind's predictions of danger – our brain cannot predict the future, but it tries and if it thinks there is danger ahead, we will feel anxious. Our brain's predictions are not always accurate.



Meant to be unpleasant – to motivate us away from a situation that our brain thinks is dangerous



Protective – it therefore helps keep us safe if the danger we predicted is real



Sometimes intense – sometimes our anxiety can get very strong and overwhelm us



Self-limiting – anxiety passes and fades if we let it happen. Our body will not go on making us feel anxious forever and our anxiety will not carry on increasing indefinitely

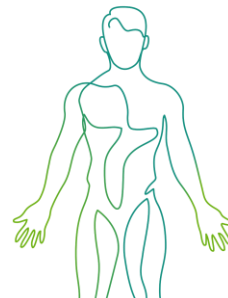
Our body is adapted to handle high anxiety – an anxiety or panic attack will not do us physical harm or cause us to lose our mind, although this is a common fear during a panic attack

There are many different physical symptoms that might accompany anxiety.

Put a tick next to the symptoms that concern you or write down some of your own.

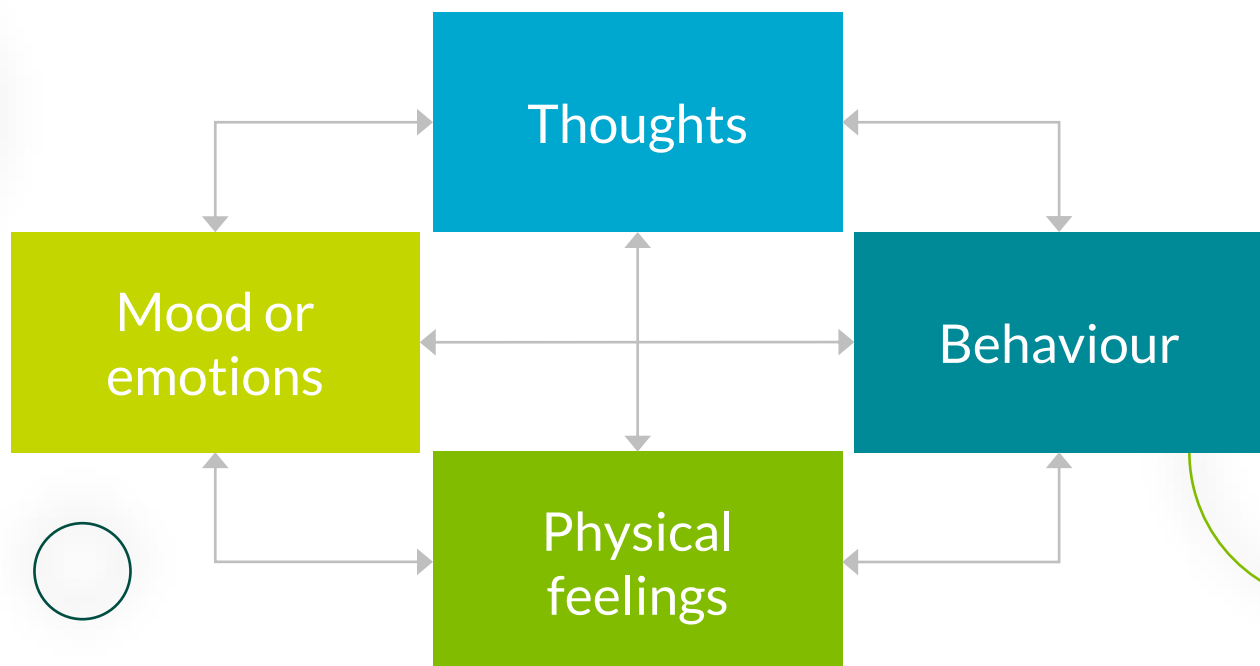
Common anxiety symptoms

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strong or rapid heart rate | <input type="checkbox"/> Tension in muscles (shoulders, jaw) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Palpitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness or pressure in the chest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> Needing to go to the toilet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light-headed or feeling faint | <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of unreality, depersonalisation (feeling detached) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweating | <input type="checkbox"/> Blurred vision or tunnel vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling hot or cold | <input type="checkbox"/> Numbness & tingling in extremities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling sick/nauseous | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butterflies in your stomach | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth or throat | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration & memory | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shaking, or trembling | |







Do you have any other physical symptoms?

The Cognitive Behavioural Model (CBT)



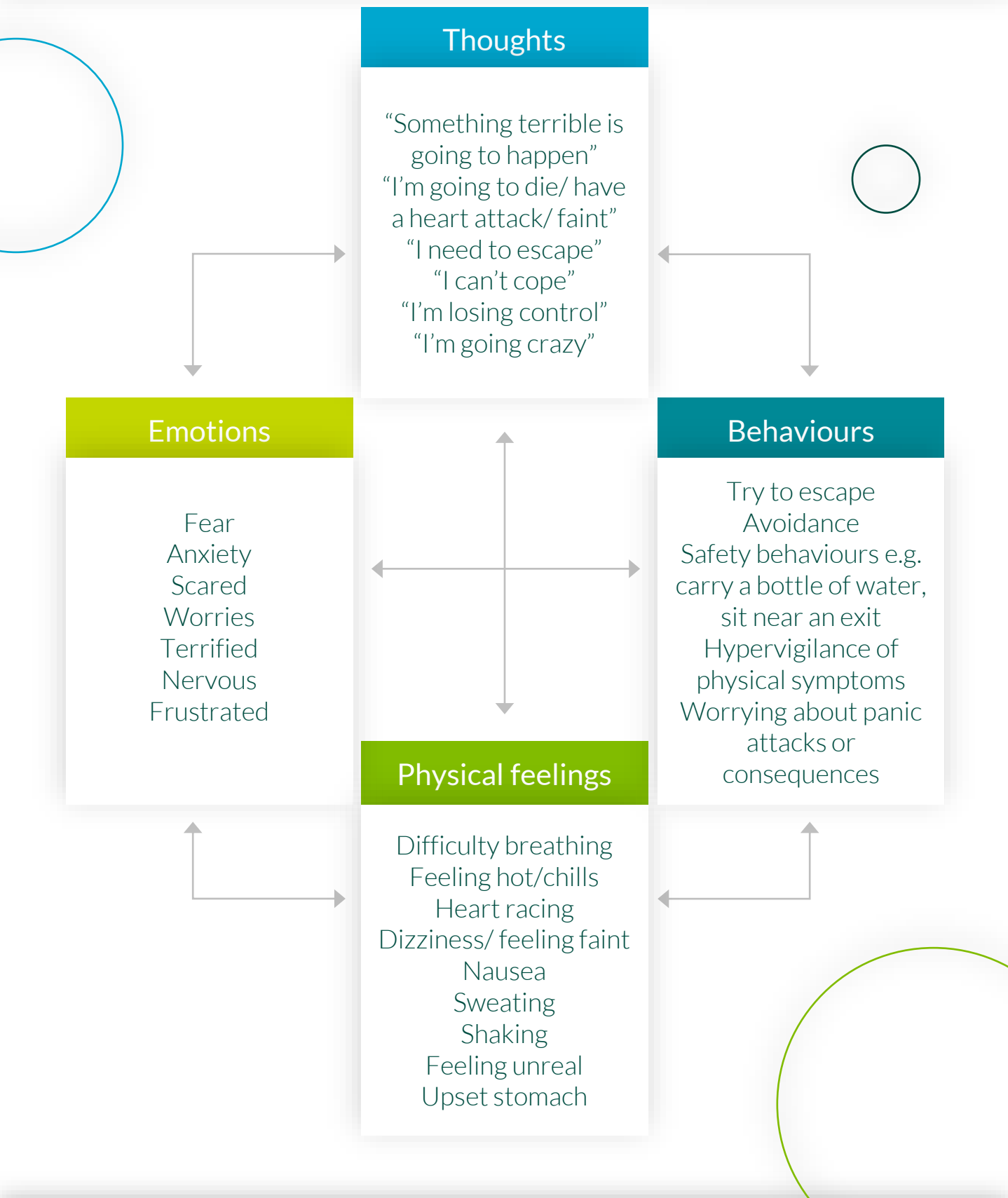
Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) focuses on present maintenance cycles to understand our difficulties. CBT looks at what physical symptoms, behaviours, thoughts and emotions we experience, and how each of these areas impact each other:

-  **Thoughts** are often negative and exaggerated (e.g. worst case scenario, self critical)
-  **Behaviours** are our attempts to cope with a situation (e.g. avoidance)
-  **Physical sensations** are how our body reacts to our problem (e.g. tension, tiredness)
-  **Mood or emotions** are how we feel (e.g. low, angry, scared, or embarrassed)

When we understand this, we can see that by changing one of these to be more helpful or positive, the others will change too. CBT uses evidence-based techniques to help us make positive changes to break out of these cycles and improve our wellbeing.

Throughout your sessions, we will help to introduce specific tools and techniques which you can use to help manage your mood and anxiety. You will be expected to practise these techniques and review these each week. This will enable you to become your own therapist.

Vicious Cycle of Panic



Your CBT Cycle

