



RECOVERY

TOOLS FOR

Keeping your Cool Tools for Managing Anxiety

ANXIETY

We've all felt anxious - the sweaty palms, the racing heart, the shakiness. Anxiety is a mild form of fear. New experiences can cause us to feel anxious, as can thinking about tasks we don't feel prepared for. Often, anxiety seems to come out of nowhere. Ordinary anxiety is a normal part of life. Anxiety can even be helpful when we do difficult tasks because it makes us more alert. For many, though, anxiety can be distressing. For those times, self help methods can help control anxious feelings. Here are some things to remember:

It's a Normal Feeling. Anxiety is a normal feeling, so try not to get anxious about being anxious. Many people worry because they are anxious, which causes more problems.

Use it to Learn More About Yourself. If you've been more anxious than usual, use this as a chance to do some self discovery. Is there a problem or a decision that you've been putting off? Perhaps something is bothering you that you're not aware of.

Get Out and Do Something! Doing something physical can help you get rid of the anxious feelings and stay calm. Take a walk, exercise or work in your yard. People also find that meditation or prayer frees them from anxiety.

Use Relaxation Techniques. Deep breathing focuses your energy on

something other than the anxious feelings. If you start to feel anxious, inhale deeply, hold it for a second or two, then let it out slowly. Repeat this several times.

Rely on Your Friends. Talking things over with friends can help. They can give you a fresh point of view about your problems. Sometimes, just talking about anxiety can calm you.

PANIC ATTACKS

Panic attacks can be managed. While handling severe anxiety and panic requires more effort, it doesn't have to limit your life. The symptoms of a panic attack include:

- intense fear or dread
- heart palpitations, even chest pains
- numbness or tingling of hands, feet, legs or arms
- dizziness or faintness
- feelings of unreality
- feeling like you're going to lose control

People who have panic attacks know their fears are irrational, but feel like they can't do anything about them. This feeling of powerlessness causes many people to feel depressed. Here are some ways others have been able to cope with the symptoms and move on with their lives:

Recognize You are Okay. Experiencing panic attacks for the first time can be very discouraging. People even experience a sense of loss, because they may believe they can no longer achieve what they want in life because of

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the disorder. People do manage their symptoms and they do recover so they can live their lives and reach their goals. Having a panic disorder is not the end of your dreams.

Use Positive Affirmations. Some people see themselves as less valuable after learning they have a mental disorder. Recognize that you are still the person you always were. When negative thoughts creep in, learn to counter them with positive statements about yourself. Say to yourself “*I am a positive (intelligent, caring, friendly, loving, etc.) person,*” several times a day.

Visualization can Help You While You are Having an Attack. This technique takes practice, but it works for many. Try to picture a calm or pleasing scene in your mind. Focus on the scene and as many of the details as you possibly can, such as the colors, the smells or the sounds that might be there.

Remember the Limits of the Attack. When you are experiencing a panic attack, the feelings are so intense that you lose track of time. While the experience feels like it will last forever, most last only a few minutes. Timing the attack has worked for some people to help ground them. They look at their watch and realize they only have to endure the feeling for a few more minutes. Also, remember that people rarely lose control when having an attack.

You Don't Have to Explain Unless You Want To. If you become shaky or flushed in a public place and others notice, you don't owe anyone an accurate explanation. People become shaky, flushed or leave in the middle of a meeting for all kinds of reasons.

You are not Alone. Many people share your experiences. In fact, anxiety is the fifth most common reason why people see the doctor. The right combination of medication, therapy and self help has helped millions of people.

Community Mental Health Centers

Pikes Peak MHC
719-573-9514

Spanish Peaks MHC
719-545-2746

San Luis Valley MHC
719-589-3671

Southeast Mental Health
Services
719-384-5446

West Central MHC
719-275-2351

Southwest Colorado
MHC
970-259-2162

Midwestern MHC
970-249-9694

Colorado West MHC
970-945-2241

Colorado Health Networks believes that people can and do recover from mental illness. That is why we created *Tools for Recovery*. *Tools for Recovery* is a series of tip sheets that are written by and for consumers about issues, opportunities and obstacles people face in their recovery from mental illness. These tip sheets are available through your mental health center or by calling the Access to Care

Line at:

1-800-804-5008

Visit us on the web at:
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