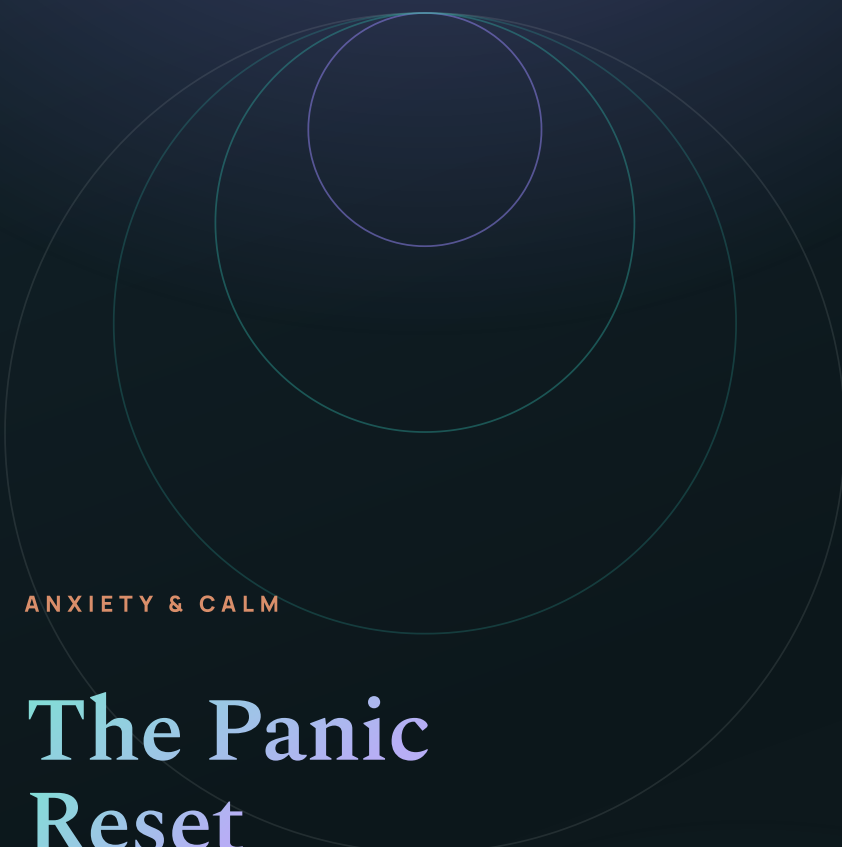




ANXIETY & CALM

The Panic Reset

*Exactly what to do in the first 90 seconds of a
panic spike.*

Stillpoint

DIGITAL SELF-HELP GUIDE



The Panic Reset

Exactly what to do in the first 90 seconds of a panic spike.

STILLPOINT

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WELCOME

Before You Begin

If you're reading this, you probably know the feeling: the sudden surge, the racing heart, the certainty that something is very wrong. Panic is one of the most frightening experiences a person can have — and one of the most misunderstood. This book is built to be useful in the moment. It's short, direct, and organised so you can find what you need fast. The techniques inside are body-first, because during a panic surge your thinking brain is the last thing to come back online. You'll learn what to do in the first ninety seconds, how to slow a racing heart, what to say to yourself, and how to recover gently afterwards. Read it once now, while you're calm, so it's already familiar when you need it. Then keep it where you can reach it.

— *The Stillpoint Team*

Getting the Most From This Book

This is a short book by design — but it isn't a race. The ideas here work best when you let them settle and put them into practice, one at a time. Here's how to get the most from the pages ahead.

1

Read actively.

Every chapter ends with a *Try This* exercise and a set of *Key Takeaways*. The reading plants the idea; the exercise is what makes it yours.

2

Start small.

You don't need to apply everything at once. Choose a single practice, let it become genuinely easy, and only then add another.

3

Keep what works.

Anxiety is personal. Some tools will click for you and others won't — keep the ones that help and quietly leave the rest.

4

Be kind to yourself.

Progress is never a straight line. A hard day isn't a failure or a reset to zero — it's simply part of the path.

Whenever you're ready, turn the page and let's begin.

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What's Happening In A Panic Attack

The single most useful thing you can understand about panic is what it actually is. Not because understanding stops it — it doesn't, not on its own — but because the terror of a panic attack is largely built on a misreading of what your body is doing. Correcting that misreading takes a great deal of the power out of it.

A false alarm, at full volume

A panic attack is your body's emergency response firing at full strength when there's no emergency. Adrenaline floods your system. Your heart speeds up to move blood to your muscles. Your breathing quickens to take in more oxygen. Blood shifts away from your extremities and your digestive system, which is why your hands tingle and your stomach lurches.

Every single one of those sensations is your body doing exactly what it's designed to do to keep you alive. Nothing is malfunctioning. The only error is in the trigger — the alarm went off without a fire.

The alarm is deafening because it was built to be. That is not the same as being in danger.

Why it feels so dangerous

The sensations of panic overlap almost perfectly with the sensations of a genuine medical emergency, which is why so many people end up in A&E convinced they're having a heart attack. Racing heart, chest tightness, breathlessness, dizziness, a sense of unreality — these are alarming precisely because your body designed them to be impossible to ignore.

So the fear is understandable. But the interpretation is wrong, and the interpretation is what turns a two-minute adrenaline surge into a twenty-minute ordeal. Frightening thoughts about the sensations trigger more adrenaline, which produces more sensations, which produce more frightening thoughts.

It always ends

This is worth holding onto: panic attacks are self-limiting. Your body physically cannot sustain the surge — adrenaline is metabolised, and the response winds down on its own. Most peak within a few minutes and subside substantially within twenty or thirty.

You have never had a panic attack that didn't end, and you never will. That isn't a comforting platitude; it's a physiological fact. The techniques in this book aren't what make it stop. They shorten it, soften it, and — most importantly — stop you from feeding it. If you did nothing at all, it would still pass.

Try This – Rewrite The Sensation

Do this now, while calm. You're pre-loading a more accurate interpretation so it's available when you need it.

1. Write down the sensation that frightens you most during panic (racing heart, breathlessness, dizziness).
2. Next to it, write what that sensation actually is: "adrenaline moving blood to my muscles."
3. Add one line: "Uncomfortable, not dangerous. It peaks and it passes."
4. Read it a few times so the wording feels familiar rather than new.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Panic is a real emergency response firing without a real emergency.
- The sensations are alarming by design — that doesn't make them dangerous.
- Panic attacks are self-limiting; every one you've had has ended.

The First 90 Seconds

What you do in the opening moments shapes how the whole episode goes. Not because you can stop the surge — you mostly can't — but because this is where you either feed the cycle or step out of it. Here is the exact sequence. Learn it in order, so you don't have to think.

Step one — name it

The instant you recognise what's happening, label it, silently or out loud: "This is a panic attack. It is not dangerous. It will pass." This sounds almost too simple, but naming an experience engages a different part of your brain than being swept along by it.

Naming also short-circuits the most damaging thought in panic, which is "something is terribly wrong." You're replacing an ambiguous, escalating threat with a known, bounded event that you have survived before.

You don't have to stop the wave. You only have to stop adding to it.

Step two — drop the fight

Every instinct will tell you to fight the sensations, force them down, escape the room. Resist that. Struggling against panic is like struggling in

quicksand — the effort itself generates more adrenaline and extends the episode.

Instead, aim for something closer to allowing. Let the wave be there. Say:

"Okay. This is happening. I don't like it, and I can let it move through."

You're not being passive or giving up. You're stopping the second surge that fear-of-the-fear would otherwise create.

Step three – long exhale

Now go to the body, because it's the fastest route. Breathe in through your nose, then let a long, slow breath out through your mouth — aim for the exhale to be roughly twice as long as the inhale. Repeat. Don't try to breathe deeply; try to breathe out slowly.

During panic, most people over-breathe, which lowers carbon dioxide and produces exactly the dizziness and tingling that frighten them most.

Extending the exhale directly counteracts this and activates the branch of your nervous system responsible for calming down.

Try This – Memorise The Three Steps

This sequence needs to be automatic. Practise it now so it's retrievable when your thinking brain goes offline.

1. Say the three steps out loud: Name it. Drop the fight. Long exhale.
2. Practise the long exhale five times right now — in through the nose, slow out through the mouth.
3. Write the three steps on a card or in your phone notes.
4. Read them once a day for a week so they're familiar, not novel.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Name it first — "this is panic, it isn't dangerous, it passes."
- Fighting the surge generates more adrenaline and lengthens it.
- Slow the exhale rather than trying to breathe deeply.

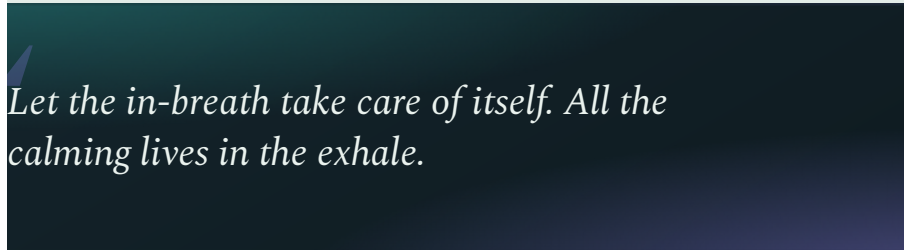
Breathing To Slow The Heart

Breathing is the only part of your autonomic nervous system you can consciously control, which makes it the most direct lever you have on a racing heart. But most breathing advice given during panic is subtly wrong, and doing it wrong can make things worse. Here's what actually works.

The physiological sigh

This is the fastest tool available, and it takes about twenty seconds. Breathe in through your nose, then — without exhaling — take a second, shorter sip of air on top, filling your lungs completely. Then release one long, slow breath out through your mouth. Repeat one to three times.

That double inhale reinflates the small air sacs in your lungs that collapse under stress, and the extended exhale offloads carbon dioxide efficiently while triggering the body's calming response. You will usually feel your heart rate drop within a few breaths.



Let the in-breath take care of itself. All the calming lives in the exhale.

Why 'take a deep breath' backfires

The standard advice — take a big deep breath — often makes panic worse. During an attack you're already over-breathing. Adding more big inhales

pushes carbon dioxide lower still, intensifying the dizziness, tingling, and unreality that scared you in the first place.

The correction is simple: focus almost entirely on the out-breath. Let the inhale be normal and unforced. Make the exhale long, slow, and complete. If you find it hard to slow down, try exhaling through pursed lips as though cooling a hot drink.

When breathing feels impossible

Sometimes the chest is so tight that controlled breathing feels out of reach. Don't force it — forcing creates more panic about not being able to breathe. Switch tactics instead: hum, or say a long "ssss" or "vooo" sound on the out-breath. This naturally extends the exhale without you having to concentrate on it.

Alternatively, put one hand on your belly and simply notice the movement without trying to change it for thirty seconds. Observation alone tends to slow the pattern, and it removes the pressure of getting the technique right.

Try This – Three Physiological Sighs

Practise on a calm day so the mechanics are automatic. It should feel easy and slightly relieving.

1. Inhale through your nose until your lungs feel about 80% full.
2. Without exhaling, take a second short sip of air through your nose.
3. Release one long, slow breath out through your mouth until your lungs feel empty.
4. Repeat twice more, then sit still for thirty seconds and notice any shift.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The physiological sigh — double inhale, long exhale — is the fastest reset.
- "Take a deep breath" often worsens panic by lowering CO₂ further.
- If breathing feels impossible, hum or sigh out loud instead of forcing technique.

The Pocket Script

During panic, your capacity to reason drops sharply. This is not a failure of will — it's blood flow and adrenaline. Which means the worst possible moment to try to construct a reassuring argument is mid-attack. The solution is to write it in advance and simply read or recite it.

Why a script beats improvisation

Left to improvise, an anxious mind will produce catastrophic predictions, because that's what a threat-primed brain is built to do. A pre-written script gives you something true and steady to hold onto that doesn't depend on your ability to think clearly in the moment.

It also removes an enormous burden. You don't have to talk yourself down from scratch every time. You just have to read four sentences you already decided were true when you were calm and rational.

Decide what's true while you're calm. Then you only have to read it when you're not.

What makes a script work

Good scripts are short, true, and unsentimental. They don't promise the feeling will vanish immediately — a promise that fails will destroy your

trust in the script. They acknowledge the discomfort while correcting the danger interpretation.

A workable template: "This is a panic attack. My body is doing something uncomfortable but not harmful. I've felt this before and it passed. I don't need to fight it or fix it. I just need to breathe out slowly and let it move through."

Keep it physically reachable

A script you can't reach is a script you don't have. Write it on a card for your wallet, set it as your phone lock screen, or save it as the first note in your notes app so it takes one tap. Some people record themselves reading it and play it back — hearing your own calm voice can be more grounding than reading.

Practise reading it aloud a few times when you're settled. You want the words to feel worn-in and familiar, not like a stranger's advice arriving at the worst possible moment.

Try This — Write Your Script Now

Four sentences, written while you're calm. This is the single most useful thing in this book.

1. Sentence 1 — name it: "This is a panic attack."
2. Sentence 2 — correct the danger reading: "It's uncomfortable but not harmful."
3. Sentence 3 — remind yourself of evidence: "I've felt this before and it passed."
4. Sentence 4 — give one instruction: "Breathe out slowly and let it move through."
5. Save it somewhere you can reach in one tap, and read it aloud twice today.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your reasoning capacity drops during panic — write the words in advance.
- Good scripts are short, true, and don't over-promise instant relief.
- Store it one tap away and rehearse it while calm so it feels familiar.

Grounding Through The Senses

Panic pulls you into your head and into an imagined future — the catastrophe that's about to happen. Grounding does the opposite: it drags your attention back into the present through your senses, which is the one place panic cannot follow. Use these when your thoughts are moving too fast to work with directly.

The 5-4-3-2-1 method

Look around and silently name five things you can see. Then four things you can physically feel — the chair, your feet in your shoes, fabric on your arms. Then three things you can hear. Two you can smell. One you can taste. Go slowly, and genuinely find each one.

This works because your senses only ever operate in the present. You cannot see or hear a feared future event. By deliberately feeding your attention real, present-tense information, you starve the catastrophic loop of the fuel it needs.

Panic lives in what might happen. Your senses only ever report what is.

Cold and pressure

When thoughts are moving too fast even for 5-4-3-2-1, go blunter. Hold something cold — a cold can, an ice cube, cold water on your wrists or face.

Cold is a strong, undeniable sensory signal that reliably interrupts a spiralling attention.

Pressure works similarly: press your feet firmly into the floor, push your palms hard against a wall for ten seconds, or wrap yourself in something heavy. These give your nervous system a clear physical anchor at a moment when everything else feels unmoored.

Orient to the room

A simple technique used in trauma work: slowly turn your head and let your eyes travel around the space you're in, taking in the corners, the doorway, the objects. Don't stare — let your gaze move naturally, the way you'd look around a room you'd just walked into.

This deliberate visual orienting signals to a threat-scanning brain that it has surveyed the environment and found no danger. It's a small, physical way of answering the question your nervous system is frantically asking.

Try This — Run 5-4-3-2-1 Now

Practise it calm so it's a familiar path when you need it. It should take about ninety seconds.

1. Name five things you can see, out loud or silently.
2. Name four things you can physically feel right now.
3. Name three things you can hear, including quiet background sounds.
4. Name two things you can smell, then one you can taste.
5. Finish by slowly looking around the whole room, corner to corner.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your senses only work in the present — panic's story lives in the future.
- Cold and firm pressure interrupt a spiral when thoughts move too fast.
- Slowly orienting to the room tells a scanning brain the area is clear.

The Gentle Recovery

The hour after an attack matters more than most people realise. This is when you're depleted, shaky, and often flooded with embarrassment or dread about the next one. How you treat yourself here shapes how much power panic has over you going forward.

Expect the aftershock

After the surge passes you'll likely feel wrung out, foggy, and physically tired — sometimes with lingering trembling or a headache. This is the normal aftermath of a large adrenaline release, and it can last a few hours. It is not a sign that something is still wrong or that another attack is imminent.

Knowing this in advance prevents a common trap: interpreting normal post-adrenaline fatigue as evidence of ongoing danger, which starts the cycle again. Expect to feel rough for a while, and let that be unremarkable.

How you treat yourself afterwards decides how much power the next one will have.

Be as kind as you'd be to a friend

Many people follow an attack with a wave of self-criticism — embarrassment about where it happened, frustration at not coping, fear of what it means. This is understandable and completely counterproductive; shame is itself a stressor, and it makes the next episode more likely.

Try instead to treat yourself the way you'd treat a friend who'd just been through something frightening. Something warm to drink. A gentler pace for the next hour. No demands to explain or justify. You have just been through a genuinely hard experience.

Don't let it shrink your world

The most consequential decision comes later: whether to start avoiding wherever the attack happened. Avoidance brings immediate relief and long-term cost — every place you avoid teaches your brain that the place was genuinely dangerous, and your world quietly gets smaller.

Where you reasonably can, return to that shop, that train, that meeting room — not heroically, and not immediately, but eventually and deliberately. If avoidance has already taken hold, that's exactly what a graded, step-by-step approach is designed to reverse, and it's worth seeking support to work through it.

Try This – Build A Recovery Ritual

Decide in advance what the hour after looks like, so you don't have to plan it while depleted.

1. Choose one comforting physical thing: a warm drink, a blanket, a shower.
2. Choose one low-demand activity for thirty minutes — nothing requiring decisions.
3. Write one line of self-kindness in advance to read afterwards.
4. Note where it happened, and plan a gentle return rather than avoidance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Feeling wrung out for hours afterwards is normal adrenaline aftermath.
- Self-criticism after an attack is a stressor that makes the next one likelier.
- Avoidance brings quick relief and slowly shrinks your world — plan a gentle return.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Your Action Plan

Your panic toolkit on one page. The first three items should be done today, while you're calm — they're what make everything else usable in the moment.

- ☐ Write your four-sentence pocket script and save it one tap away.
- ☐ Memorise the three opening steps: name it, drop the fight, long exhale.
- ☐ Practise three physiological sighs today while calm.
- ☐ Rewrite your most frightening sensation as what it physically is.
- ☐ Practise 5-4-3-2-1 grounding once so the path is familiar.
- ☐ Identify a cold or pressure anchor you can reach quickly.
- ☐ Remind yourself: every attack you have had has ended.
- ☐ Decide your recovery ritual for the hour afterwards.
- ☐ List any places you've started avoiding, and plan one gentle return.
- ☐ If attacks are frequent or your world is shrinking, speak to a qualified professional.

Where You Go From Here

Panic is frightening, but it is not dangerous, and it is not permanent. The tools in this book work best when they're familiar — so read them once more while you're settled, write your script, and put it somewhere you can reach. Then let yourself relax about it. You do not need to be on guard, and you do not need to perform these techniques perfectly. Even doing nothing at all, the wave would pass. These tools simply make the crossing shorter and less frightening, and they stop you from feeding the cycle. Be patient and be kind to yourself. Many people find that once panic stops being terrifying, it stops being frequent — and that shift usually begins with exactly the understanding you've just built.

Breathe. Begin. Return.

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