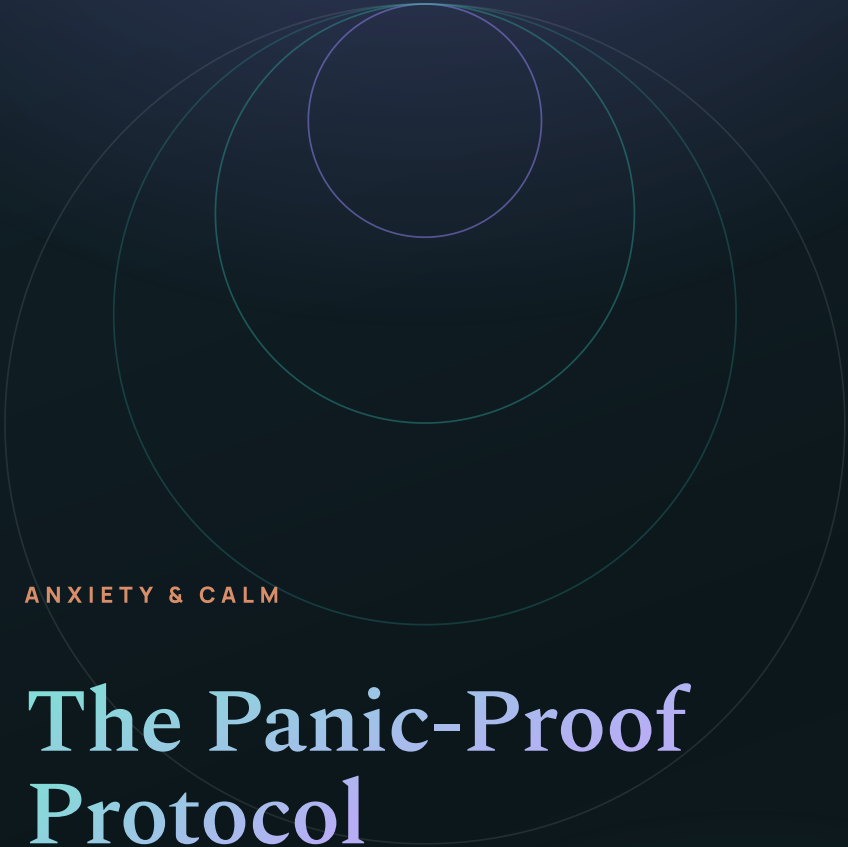




ANXIETY & CALM

The Panic-Proof Protocol

Advanced training to prevent panic — not just survive it.

Stillpoint

DIGITAL SELF-HELP GUIDE



The Panic-Proof Protocol

*Advanced training to prevent panic — not just survive
it.*

STILLPOINT

An educational self-help guide. This book is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical or mental-health advice. © 2026 Stillpoint. All rights reserved.

WELCOME

Before You Begin

Knowing how to survive a panic attack is a good start. But surviving is not the same as being free. If you're still organising your life around the possibility of the next attack — scanning your body, avoiding certain places, carrying your safety objects — then panic is still running things, even on the days it doesn't show up. This book is about the next stage: systematically dismantling the machinery that produces attacks in the first place. The work here is more demanding than in-the-moment tools, and it asks you to move deliberately toward discomfort rather than away from it. Go at your own pace, and don't do this alone if it feels like too much — a qualified therapist can guide this work brilliantly. But if you're ready, what follows is the path from managing panic to genuinely outgrowing 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.

CONTENTS

What's Inside

01 Beyond The Reset

Moving from stopping attacks to preventing them at the source.

02 The Fear-Of-Fear Cycle

How anticipatory anxiety quietly manufactures the next attack.

03 Interoceptive Exposure

Safely practising feared body sensations until they defuse.

04 Dropping Your Safety Behaviours

How crutches and avoidance keep panic switched on.

05 Your Resilience Training Plan

A gradual, week-by-week plan to build panic tolerance.

06 Living Panic-Proof

Relapse-proofing your progress and playing the long game.

Beyond The Reset

In-the-moment techniques are useful, but they have a hidden cost: used the wrong way, they can quietly become part of the problem. This chapter is about the difference between coping with panic and dissolving it — and why the second requires a fundamentally different strategy.

The difference between coping and freedom

Coping tools shorten an attack. That's genuinely valuable, especially early on. But if your entire relationship with panic consists of getting better at surviving it, you remain in a defensive posture — permanently braced, permanently monitoring. Many people reach a plateau here: fewer full attacks, but a constant low hum of vigilance that never lifts.

Freedom is different. It means the sensations lose their threat value entirely, so there's nothing to brace against. You get there not by managing the fear more skilfully, but by teaching your nervous system, through direct experience, that the sensations were never dangerous.

You don't outgrow panic by getting better at surviving it. You outgrow it by no longer needing to.

When a coping tool becomes a crutch

Here's the subtle trap. If you breathe your way out of every surge, part of you concludes: "That was close — the breathing saved me." The implicit lesson is that the sensations were dangerous and required rescue. So the fear is preserved, and the tool becomes something you can't do without.

The test is simple. Ask: am I using this technique to move through the experience, or to escape it? The same breathing exercise can be either. Used as an anchor while you let the wave pass, it's helpful. Used as an emergency handbrake against a danger you believe is real, it quietly reinforces the fear.

What this book asks of you

The approach ahead reverses your instinct. Instead of avoiding the sensations you dread, you'll deliberately and gradually bring them on, in controlled doses, until your body stops treating them as an emergency. This is a well-established approach, and it works — but it will feel counterintuitive at first.

Two conditions before you begin. First, get any unexplained physical symptoms checked by a doctor, so you know you're working with anxiety and not something else. Second, go gradually. This is not about flooding yourself with terror to prove a point; it's about small, repeated, tolerable doses.

Try This — Audit Your Tools

Work out which of your current strategies are helping you through and which are helping you escape.

1. List everything you do when panic starts (breathing, leaving, calling someone, checking your pulse).
2. Mark each one: A = helps me stay and move through, B = helps me escape or check for danger.
3. Circle your top two B items — these are the ones to reduce over the coming weeks.
4. Note how you'd feel if you couldn't use them. Strong resistance signals a genuine crutch.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Coping shortens attacks; freedom removes the threat value of the sensations.
- A tool used to escape sensations quietly confirms they were dangerous.
- Get unexplained physical symptoms medically checked before starting this work.

The Fear-Of-Fear Cycle

Almost nobody with recurring panic is actually afraid of the situations they avoid. They're afraid of what their body might do in those situations. Understanding this shift — from fearing the world to fearing your own sensations — is the key that unlocks everything else.

The real object of the fear

After a few attacks, the fear reorganises itself. You stop worrying primarily about the supermarket or the motorway and start worrying about having an attack in the supermarket or on the motorway. The feared object is now internal: a racing heart, a wave of dizziness, the feeling of unreality.

This is why avoiding places never quite works. You can leave a supermarket, but you can't leave your own body. The fear travels with you, which is why it tends to spread to new situations over time rather than staying contained.

You cannot avoid your way out of a fear that lives inside your own body.

Hypervigilance manufactures evidence

Once your body becomes the threat, you start monitoring it. You check your pulse. You notice every flutter, every odd sensation, every slight breathlessness. And here's the problem: bodies are noisy. There is always

something to find — a skipped beat, a tight chest after coffee, light-headedness from standing up quickly.

Ordinarily these pass unnoticed. Under hypervigilance, each one gets flagged as a potential emergency, which triggers adrenaline, which produces more sensations. Your monitoring system reliably generates the evidence it was looking for. This is the engine of the cycle.

Anticipatory anxiety

The third component is the dread that lives between attacks. Worrying about a future attack keeps your baseline arousal elevated, which means you're starting closer to the threshold — and a smaller trigger is enough to tip you over. In this way, fearing the next attack genuinely helps produce it.

This sounds bleak but it's actually good news. It means the cycle has several intervention points that have nothing to do with the attack itself. Reduce the monitoring, reduce the anticipatory dread, and the attacks lose the conditions they need.

Try This – Map Your Cycle

Draw your personal version of the loop so you can see exactly where to intervene.

1. Write the sensation you fear most in the centre of a page.
2. Above it, write what you tell yourself when you notice it.
3. To the right, write what you do in response (check, avoid, escape, reassure).
4. Below, write how that response affects your fear the next time.
5. Circle the one link in the loop that feels most within your control this week.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The real fear is usually of your own sensations, not the situation.
- Body-monitoring reliably finds evidence, because bodies are always noisy.
- Dreading the next attack raises your baseline and helps produce it.

Interoceptive Exposure

This is the core technique of the book, and the one that feels most counterintuitive: deliberately producing the sensations you fear, in small controlled doses, until your body stops responding to them as threats. It sounds unpleasant. It is, mildly and briefly. It also works better than almost anything else.

Why deliberately provoking works

Your nervous system learns from experience, not argument. You can tell yourself a thousand times that a racing heart is harmless, but if you've spent years treating it as an emergency, the belief lives deeper than words. What changes it is repeatedly experiencing the sensation and having nothing bad happen.

Crucially, when you bring the sensation on deliberately, the context changes completely. You caused it, you expected it, and you know what it is.

Repeated in that frame, the sensation gradually loses its alarm value — the process therapists call habituation.

The sensation you have been running from is the one thing that can teach you it was never dangerous.

The standard drills

Each drill targets a specific sensation. To provoke a racing heart: run on the spot or do star jumps for sixty seconds. For dizziness: sit in a swivel chair and spin gently for thirty seconds, or shake your head side to side for fifteen. For breathlessness: breathe through a straw for thirty to sixty seconds.

For chest tightness: hold your breath for as long as is comfortable. For unreality or detachment: stare at a spot on the wall, or at your own reflection, for two minutes. Pick the drill matching the sensation that frightens you most — that's where the value is.

How to run a session safely

Do the drill for the specified time. Then — and this is the essential part — stay with the sensation as it fades. Don't distract yourself, don't do a breathing exercise, don't check anything. Just sit and let it pass on its own. That waiting is where the learning happens.

Rate your anxiety from 0-10 before, at peak, and after. Repeat the same drill three to five times in a session, several times a week. You're looking for the peak rating to drop across repetitions. Stop if you feel genuinely unwell, and skip any drill your doctor has advised against.

Try This — Your First Drill

Start with something mild. The aim is a manageable 4-5 out of 10, not terror.

1. Pick the sensation you fear most and its matching drill.
2. Rate your anxiety 0-10, then run the drill for 30-60 seconds.
3. Stop and sit still. Do NOT use any calming technique — just let it fade.
4. Rate the peak, then rate again once it's passed.
5. Repeat three times. Note whether the peak rating falls with each round.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your nervous system learns from repeated experience, not from reassurance.
- Match the drill to the exact sensation you fear most.
- The learning happens while you sit with the sensation and let it fade unaided.

Dropping Your Safety Behaviours

Safety behaviours are the small things you do to feel protected — carrying water, sitting near exits, keeping unused medication in your pocket, always having your phone charged in case. They feel harmless and sensible. They are also one of the main reasons panic persists.

How safety behaviours preserve fear

Every time you get through a difficult situation while using a safety behaviour, your brain draws the wrong conclusion. It doesn't learn "that situation was fine." It learns "that situation was survivable because I had the water bottle." The credit goes to the crutch, and the underlying fear stays untouched.

This is why some people do exposure for months without improving. They're entering feared situations, but always with their full kit of protective behaviours, so the disconfirming evidence never actually lands. The fear is never given a chance to be proven wrong.

As long as something else gets the credit for your safety, you will never learn that you were safe.

Spotting the subtle ones

Obvious safety behaviours are easy to spot. Subtler ones hide in plain sight: distracting yourself with your phone, tensing your muscles, gripping a trolley, sitting down pre-emptively, mentally rehearsing an exit route, texting someone to say where you are, or repeatedly checking your pulse.

A useful test: if you imagine doing the activity without it and feel a flicker of dread, it's functioning as a safety behaviour — regardless of how reasonable it looks from outside.

Dropping them gradually

Don't strip everything away at once. Rank your safety behaviours from easiest to hardest to give up, then drop them one at a time, starting at the bottom. Stay with each change until it feels unremarkable before moving to the next.

A gentle intermediate step: keep the object but stop using it. Carry the water bottle but don't drink from it. Then leave it in your bag. Then leave it at home. Each step gives your brain a chance to notice that nothing bad happened, and that you were the one who was fine — not the bottle.

Try This – The Safety Behaviour Ladder

Make your protective habits visible, then start dismantling them from the bottom.

1. List every safety behaviour you use, including the subtle mental ones.
2. Rank them from easiest to hardest to give up.
3. Choose the easiest one and go without it three times this week.
4. Afterwards, write down what actually happened versus what you predicted.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Safety behaviours make your brain credit the crutch instead of your own safety.
- Subtle ones — distraction, tensing, exit-planning — matter as much as objects.
- Drop them gradually, easiest first, and record what actually happened.

Your Resilience Training Plan

Scattered practice produces scattered results. This chapter turns the previous techniques into a structured, progressive plan — roughly six weeks, adjustable to your pace — so the work compounds instead of drifting.

Weeks one and two — build the base

Start with interoceptive drills only, in the safety of home. Three sessions a week, three to five repetitions of one drill per session. Choose the sensation that frightens you second-most, not most — you want early wins, not early overwhelm.

Also begin your safety-behaviour audit and drop the single easiest one. Keep a simple log: date, drill, peak rating, what happened. The log matters more than it seems — it's your evidence base, and memory is unreliable once fear is involved.

*You do not have to feel calm before you act.
Learning that is most of the freedom.*

Weeks three and four — raise the stakes

Move to the sensation you fear most, using the same structure. At the same time, start combining: run a drill and then immediately do something

ordinary — make a phone call, go for a short walk — rather than waiting until you feel fully settled.

This teaches something important: you can function perfectly well while sensations are present. Much of panic's power comes from the belief that you must feel calm before you can act. Proving that wrong is worth a great deal.

Weeks five and six — take it outside

Now bring the work into real situations. Choose a place you've been avoiding or tolerating only with safety behaviours. Enter it deliberately, without your crutches, and stay long enough for your anxiety to rise and then begin to fall on its own.

That last part is essential. Leaving at peak anxiety teaches escape; staying until it drops teaches that it drops. You don't need to reach zero — waiting for a clear, felt decline is enough. Build up gradually, and expect an uneven path rather than a straight line.

Try This — Set Up Your Log

Create the tracking sheet you'll use for the next six weeks. Keep it deliberately simple.

1. Make five columns: Date · Drill or Situation · Before (0-10) · Peak (0-10) · What Actually Happened.
2. Schedule three specific sessions into this week's calendar.
3. Choose your week-one drill: the sensation you fear second-most.
4. Write your target for week six — the real situation you want back.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Start with your second-most-feared sensation to build early wins.
- Practise acting normally while sensations are still present.
- Stay in a situation until anxiety falls on its own — leaving at peak teaches escape.

Living Panic-Proof

Progress with panic is rarely a straight line, and the way you handle the inevitable setback determines whether it's a blip or a relapse. This final chapter is about holding your gains and living well over the long run.

Expect the setback

At some point after a good stretch, you'll have another surge — usually during illness, exhaustion, or a stressful period. This is normal and does not undo your work. Your nervous system hasn't forgotten what it learned; it's simply running at a higher baseline for a while.

The danger isn't the surge itself, it's the interpretation: "It's all coming back." That thought reintroduces fear-of-fear and can restart the cycle. The more accurate reading is: "My baseline is high right now. This is a blip, not a return."

The goal was never a life without fear. It was a life that never had to get smaller because of it.

Maintain the baseline

The unglamorous fundamentals do most of the long-term work: enough sleep, regular movement, moderate caffeine and alcohol, and some genuine

recovery in your week. None of these are exciting, and all of them meaningfully change how close to threshold you live.

Caffeine deserves particular attention. It directly produces raised heart rate and jitteriness — the exact sensations you've been working to defuse. Many people find that simply moderating their intake removes a surprising amount of background arousal.

Keep your world wide

The best long-term protection is a life that hasn't quietly narrowed. Every few months, ask honestly: is there anything I've started avoiding again? Any situation I now only do with a crutch? Catching this drift early makes it easy to correct; leaving it lets the old pattern rebuild.

And if things do slide significantly, that isn't failure — it's information. A qualified therapist can help you regain ground far faster than white-knuckling it alone, and reaching out early is one of the smartest things you can do.

Try This — Write Your Setback Plan

Decide now what you'll do when a surge returns, so you don't have to decide while shaken.

1. Write: "A surge does not mean it's all coming back. My baseline is high right now."
2. List three baseline factors to check first: sleep, caffeine, and recent stress.
3. Name the one drill you'll return to for a week to re-establish confidence.
4. Set a recurring reminder every three months to check for quiet avoidance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Setbacks during illness or stress are blips, not relapses — the learning holds.
- Sleep, movement, and moderated caffeine change how close to threshold you live.
- Review every few months for avoidance creeping quietly back in.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Your Action Plan

The protocol on one page. This work is progressive — move through it in order, and give each stage the time it needs rather than rushing to the end.

- ☐ Get any unexplained physical symptoms checked by a doctor before starting.
- ☐ Audit your coping tools: which help you stay, which help you escape.
- ☐ Map your personal fear-of-fear cycle and pick one link to target.
- ☐ Choose your first interoceptive drill — your second-most-feared sensation.
- ☐ Run three drill sessions this week, letting sensations fade unaided.
- ☐ Start a simple log: date, drill, before, peak, what actually happened.
- ☐ List your safety behaviours and rank them easiest to hardest.
- ☐ Drop the easiest safety behaviour three times this week.
- ☐ Practise doing something ordinary while sensations are still present.
- ☐ Name the real-world situation you want back, and plan a graded return.
- ☐ Write your setback plan before you need it.
- ☐ If progress stalls or your world narrows, work with a qualified therapist.

Where You Go From Here

This is demanding work, and if you've read this far you already have more resolve than you're probably giving yourself credit for. The path from managing panic to outgrowing it isn't complicated, but it does ask something genuinely difficult: moving toward the sensations you've spent years running from. Do it gradually. Keep the log. Expect an uneven line rather than a steady climb. And remember that the aim was never to never feel your heart race — hearts race, that's what they do. The aim is for a racing heart to become just a racing heart, rather than a threat. Thousands of people have made exactly this shift, and there is no reason you can't be one of them. Start small, stay with it, and be patient with the process.

Breathe. Begin. Return.

This guide is for educational and self-help purposes only and is not therapy, diagnosis, or medical advice. If you are in crisis or experiencing severe or persistent anxiety, please contact a qualified health professional or a local crisis line. Payments are processed securely by Digistore24. © 2026 Stillpoint.