

When You Think That You're Dying: Coping With Panic/Anxiety Disorder (PAD)

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Your heart races, your stomach feels bloated, and your hands become cold and clammy. A tingling sensation flows down your arm. Your symptoms get worse as you rush to a hospital's Emergency Room where you insist that you're having a heart attack. Until medical tests reveal that you're physically healthy, as are the 40% to 60% of such patients evaluated at an ER who suffer from Panic/Anxiety Disorder (PAD).

Here are several guidelines to enable you to better cope with the truly terrifying symptoms of PAD.

1. After the symptoms occur for the first time, be medically evaluated so you can, in the immediate future, safely reject the belief that your distress reflects an underlying illness.

2. You must then accept the idea that anxiety is your friend. Yes, even such severe anxiety that you feel you are about to die! For the purpose of anxiety is a good one and similar to that of fever: to tell you that your existence is in danger and that you must make changes, perhaps in your work or social life, to be able to continue to live healthfully.

3. When you feel the symptoms of Panic/Anxiety Disorder (PAD), tell yourself--continually--that what you are experiencing is anxiety and not a heart attack, that anxiety

cannot kill you, and that it will go away. Try to figure out when the symptoms began and what thought or feeling might have triggered them. For some people, psychotropic medication can help in getting through these periods, while psychotherapy can aid virtually all people in eliminating or greatly reducing them.

Though painful, anxiety is always beneficial for it enables you to become the better person that, unconsciously, you sense you can be.

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