

# Panic Attack Management

**Note: A panic attack is NOT DANGEROUS.**

- They can't cause heart failure or cardiac arrest
- They will not cause someone to stop breathing or suffocate
- They will not cause fainting
- They can't cause someone to lose their balance
- They will not cause someone to fall over
- They do not cause people to "go crazy"
- They can't cause people to "lose control of themselves"

*(The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook, 2010)*

**\*If a student has symptoms of a panic attack, ring security for assistance, if needed.**

## What should I say and do if I know the student is having a panic attack?

- **Reassure the student** that they are experiencing a panic attack.
- It is important that you **remain calm** and that you do not start to panic yourself.
- Speak to the student in a reassuring and calm manner, and **be patient**.
- Speak clearly and slowly and use short, clear sentences.
- Rather than making assumptions about what the student needs, **ask them directly what they think might help**.
- Do not belittle the student's experience.
- Acknowledge that the terror feels very real, but reassure them that a panic attack, while very frightening, is **not life threatening or dangerous**.
- Reassure them that they are safe and that **the symptoms will pass**.

## What is a panic attack?

A panic attack is a sudden rush of intense anxiety or fear together with a surge of frightening physical sensations and thoughts.

### Physical sensations can include:

- \* pounding heart
- \* dizziness/faintness
- \* breathlessness
- \* chest pains
- \* numbness/tingling
- \* sweating
- \* shaking
- \* nausea

### Thoughts can include feeling like you may be:

- \* out of physical and/or emotional control
- \* dying
- \* having a heart attack/stroke
- \* passing out
- \* going crazy

**Panic attacks are usually brief**, but may be very scary while they last. They can often seem to come “out of the blue”, which makes them even scarier.

While panic sensations are a natural response to danger, panic attacks are usually out of proportion to any actual danger the person may be facing at the time. They seem to have a life of their own.