

ANXIETY

Breathing through the noise

Your heart's racing, your chest is tight, your brain is screaming worst-case scenarios. That's anxiety. It feels like danger — it isn't. It's a false alarm from a brain trying too hard to protect you. Here's how to ride it out.

1 THE 60-SECOND GROUNDING DRILL (5-4-3-2-1)

Panic lives in the future. Grounding drags you back to right now. Wherever you are, find:

- > 5 things you can SEE — say them out loud or in your head
- > 4 things you can TOUCH — actually touch them, notice the texture
- > 3 things you can HEAR — traffic, birds, your own breath
- > 2 things you can SMELL — coffee, rain, your hoodie
- > 1 thing you can TASTE — gum helps, keep some on you

2 BOX BREATHING (THE DIAGRAM)

Slow breathing tells your nervous system the danger has passed. Trace a square with your finger while you do it:

- > Breathe IN for 4 counts (up the side of the square)
- > HOLD for 4 (across the top)
- > Breathe OUT for 4 (down the other side)
- > HOLD for 4 (across the bottom)
- > Repeat until the wave drops — usually 2-3 minutes

3 WHAT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENING IN YOUR BODY

Racing heart? That's adrenaline pumping blood to your muscles. Tight chest? Fast shallow breathing. Dizzy? Too much oxygen, not too little. Tingling hands? Blood moving to your core. None of it is dangerous. A panic attack cannot kill you, and it always ends — most peak within 10 minutes.

4 FOR THE EVERYDAY HUM (NOT JUST PANIC)

- > Cut back caffeine and energy drinks — they mimic anxiety symptoms
- > Move your body daily — a fast 10-minute walk genuinely counts
- > Name it to tame it: write down the exact worry. Vague dread is scarier than a named problem
- > Schedule 'worry time' — 15 minutes a day to worry on purpose, then park it
- > Tell one person. Anxiety shrinks when it's spoken

POCKET PHRASE — SAY IT WHEN IT HITS

"This is a wave. Waves pass."

MAKE IT YOURS

What calms me down (write yours — songs, people, places):

GO DEEPER

NO PANIC

Charity for panic, anxiety & OCD — helpline 0300 772 9844 — <https://nopanic.org.uk>

ANXIETY UK

Support, resources and therapy access — 03444 775 774 — <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk>

NHS: ANXIETY

Straight facts and treatment options — <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder/>

MIND: ANXIETY

What it is, what helps — <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/>

IF IT'S URGENT, RIGHT NOW:

Samaritans: 116 123 (free, 24/7) • Text SHOUT to 85258

Immediate danger or badly hurt? Call 999 or go straight to A&E.

YOU ARE CAPABLE OF ANYTHING.