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Introduction

Standing in a supermarket queue, it's been a long wait but only one customer to go before you make it to the cashier. Wait, what was that sensation? An unpleasant feeling forms in your throat, your chest feels tighter, now a sudden shortness of breath, and what do you know—your heart skips a beat. "Please, God, not here."

A quick scan of the territory—is it threatening? Four unfriendly faces queue behind, one person in front. Pins and needles seem to prick you through your left arm, you feel slightly dizzy, and then the explosion of fear as you dread the worst. You are about to have a panic attack.

There is no doubt in your mind now that this is going to be a big one. Okay, focus: Remember what you have been taught, and it is time now to apply the coping techniques. Begin the deep breathing exercise your doctor recommended. In through the nose, out through the mouth. Think relaxing thoughts, and again, while breathing in, think "Relax," and then breathe out. But it doesn't seem to be having any positive effect; in fact, just concentrating on breathing is making you feel self-conscious and more uptight.

Okay, coping technique 2:

Gradual muscle relaxation. Tense both shoulders, hold for 10 seconds, then release. Try it again. No; still no difference. The anxiety is getting worse and the very fact that you are out of coping techniques worsens your panic. If only you were surrounded by your family, or a close friend were beside you so you could feel more confident in dealing with this situation.

Now, the adrenaline is really pumping through your system, your body is

tingling with uncomfortable sensations, and now the dreaded feeling of losing complete control engulfs your emotions. No one around you has any idea of the sheer terror you are experiencing. For them, it's just a regular day and another frustratingly slow queue in the supermarket.

You are out of options. Time for Plan C. The most basic coping skill of all is "fleeing." Excuse yourself from the queue; you are slightly embarrassed as it is now that it is your turn to pay. The cashier is looking bewildered as you leave your shopping behind and stroll towards the door. There is no time for excuses—you need to be alone. You leave the supermarket and get into your car to ride it out alone. Could this be the big one? The one you fear will push you over the edge mentally and physically. Ten minutes later the panic subsides.

It's 10:30 a.m. How are you going to make it through the rest of the day?

Does this situation sound in any way familiar? Maybe the bodily sensations were a little different. Maybe it happened to you for the first time on a plane, in the dentist chair, or even at home, while doing nothing in particular. If you have ever had what has become known as a "panic attack," take comfort in the fact that you are by no means alone.

A panic attack always comes with the acute sense of impending doom. You feel you are either about to lose your mind or one of your vital bodily functions is about to cease functioning and you will end your days right there among the canned goods and frozen food.

You are by no means alone; you're not even one in a million. In America, it is estimated that almost 5% of the population suffer from some form of anxiety disorder. For some, it may be the infrequent panic attacks; for others, it can be so frequent that it inhibits them from leaving their home. Frequent panic attacks often develop into what medical physicians refer to as an "anxiety disorder."

One of the first steps to regaining control of your life is getting helpful information. This book will give you that, and more. The beginning of your recovery starts here. What you will learn from this book is that there is a very good chance you are about to end the cycle of panic attacks in your life. However, I do not want to make exaggerated statements about the technique in this book, (others have kindly done that for me.) The bottom line is your life can be as it once was. In fact, by following and applying the techniques in this book, you will learn not only to regain the carefree life you remember once having, but will also gain new confidence in living. Your answer to living free from “panic” or “anxiety attacks” is at hand.

This book demonstrates that the panic that you have experienced will be the very key to your courage and success. The fear you experience, when “owned” and not “controlled,” is actually your best ally. It is the fuel that will drive your new life. Make no mistake—you are now reading the very material that will be the catalyst for your recovery. The only question left is: Why didn’t you have the answers sooner? Why had you wasted so much time living in fear?

I am going to reveal a simple technique called the “One Move” that will tackle the very core of your panic attacks. Following that, I will teach you the four tools to create a sturdy buffer zone between you and anxiety that will ensure you can rid yourself of the lingering unease and background anxiety that is so often a complaint of people who suffer from high anxiety and panic attacks.

First, let’s begin the road to recovery by examining what a panic attack is, and some of the terminology commonly used when addressing panic attacks. While many of you may have read almost everything you can possibly read relating to panic and anxiety, but I would ask you to read down through the book and not skip ahead as I assure you this book offers something very effective and helpful in managing these conditions.”

Chapter 1

The obvious: Panic attacks are caused by high anxiety.

Anxiety is probably the most basic of all emotions. While anxiety, by its nature, is an unpleasant sensation, it is not by any means dangerous.

One of the biggest myths surrounding anxiety is that it is harmful and can lead to a number of various life-threatening conditions.

Definition of Anxiety

Anxiety is defined as a state of apprehension or fear resulting from the anticipation of real or imagined threat, event, or situation. It is one of the most common human emotions experienced by people at some point in their lives. However, most people who have never experienced a panic attack, or extreme anxiety, fail to realize the terrifying nature of the experience. Extreme dizziness, blurred vision, tingling and feelings of breathlessness—and that's just the tip of the iceberg!

When these sensations occur and people do not understand why, they feel they have contracted an illness, or a serious mental condition. The threat of losing complete control seems very real and naturally very terrifying.

Fight/Flight Response

I am sure most of you have heard of the fight/flight response as an explanation for your condition. Have you made the connection between this response and the unusual sensations you experience during and after a panic attack?

Anxiety is a response to a danger or threat. It is so named because all of its effects are aimed toward either fighting or fleeing from the danger. Thus, the sole purpose of anxiety is to protect the individual from harm. It was vital in the daily survival of our ancient ancestors—when faced with some danger, an automatic response would take over that propels them to take immediate action such as attack or run. Even in today's hectic world, this is a necessary mechanism. It comes in useful when you must respond to a real threat within a split second.

Anxiety is a built-in mechanism to protect us from danger. Interestingly, it is a mechanism that protects but does not harm—an important point that will be elaborated upon later.

The Physical Manifestations of a Panic Attack

Nervousness and Chemical Effects

When confronted with danger, the brain sends signals to a section of the nervous system. It is this system that is responsible for gearing the body up for action and also calms the body down and restores equilibrium. To carry out these two vital functions, the autonomic nervous system has two subsections, the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system.

The sympathetic nervous system is the one we tend to know all too much about because it primes our body for action, readies us for the “fight or flight” response, while the parasympathetic nervous system is the one we love dearly as it serves as our restoring system, which returns the body to its normal state.

When either of these systems is activated, they stimulate the whole body, which has an “all or nothing” effect. This explains why when a panic attack occurs, the individual often feels a number of different sensations throughout the body.

The sympathetic system is responsible for releasing the adrenaline from the adrenal glands on the kidneys. These are small glands located just above the kidneys. Less known, however, is that the adrenal glands also release adrenaline, which functions as the body's chemical messengers to keep the activity going. When a panic attack begins, it does not switch off as easily as it is turned on. There is always a period of what would seem increased or continued anxiety, as these messengers travel throughout the body.

After a period of time, the parasympathetic nervous system gets called into action. Its role is to return the body to normal functioning once the perceived danger is gone. The parasympathetic system is the system we all know and love, because it returns us to a calm relaxed state.

When we engage in a coping strategy that we have learned, for example, a relaxation technique, we are in fact willing the parasympathetic nervous system into action. A good thing to remember is that this system will be brought into action at some stage whether we will it or not. The body cannot continue in an ever-increasing spiral of anxiety. It reaches a point where it simply must kick in, relaxing the body. This is one of the many built-in protection systems our bodies have for survival.

You can do your best with worrying thoughts, keeping the sympathetic nervous system going, but eventually it stops. In time, it becomes a little smarter than us, and realizes that there really is no danger. Our bodies are incredibly intelligent—modern science is always discovering amazing patterns of intelligence that run throughout the cells of our body. Our body seems to have infinite ways of dealing with the most complicated array of functions we take for granted. Rest assured that your body's primary goal is to keep you alive and well.

Not so convinced?

Try holding your breath for as long as you can. No matter how strong your mental will is, it can never override the will of the body. This is good news—no matter how hard you try to convince yourself that you are going to die from a panic attack, you won't. Your body will override that fear and search for a state of balance. There has never been a reported incident of someone dying from a panic attack.

Remember this next time you have a panic attack. Your mind may make the sensations continue longer than the body intended, but eventually everything will return to a state of balance. In fact, balance (homeostasis) is what our body continually strives for.

The interference for your body is nothing more than the sensations of doing rigorous exercise. Our body is not alarmed by these symptoms. Why should it be? It knows its own capability. It's our thinking minds that panic, which overreact and scream in sheer terror! We tend to fear the worst and exaggerate our own sensations. A quickened heart beat becomes a heart attack. An overactive mind seems like a close shave with schizophrenia. Is it our fault? Not really—we are simply diagnosing from poor information.

Cardiovascular Effects

Activity in the sympathetic nervous system increases our heartbeat rate, speeds up the blood flow throughout the body, ensures all areas are well supplied with oxygen and that waste products are removed. This happens in order to prime the body for action.

A fascinating feature of the "fight or flight" mechanism is that blood (which is channelled from areas where it is currently not needed by a tightening of the blood vessels) is brought to areas where it is urgently needed.

For example, should there be a physical attack, blood drains from the skin, fingers, and toes so that less blood is lost, and is moved to “active areas” such as the thighs and biceps to help the body prepare for action.

This is why many feel numbness and tingling during a panic attack, often misinterpreted as some serious health risk, such as the precursor to a heart attack. Interestingly, most people who suffer from anxiety often feel they have heart problems. If you are really worried that such is the case with your situation, visit your doctor and have it checked out. At least then you can put your mind at rest.

Respiratory Effects

One of the scariest effects of a panic attack is the fear of suffocating or smothering. It is very common during a panic attack to feel tightness in the chest and throat. I’m sure everyone can relate to some fear of losing control of your breathing. From personal experience, anxiety grows from the fear that your breathing itself would cease and you would be unable to recover. Can a panic attack stop our breathing? No.

A panic attack is associated with an increase in the speed and depth of breathing. This has obvious importance for the defense of the body since the tissues need to get more oxygen to prepare for action. The feelings produced by this increase in breathing, however, can include breathlessness, hyperventilation, sensations of choking or smothering, and even pains or tightness in the chest. The real problem is that these sensations are alien to us, and they feel unnatural.

Having experienced extreme panic attacks myself, I remember that on many occasions, I would have this feeling that I couldn’t trust my body to do the

breathing for me, so I would have to manually take over and tell myself when to breathe in and when to breathe out. Of course, this didn't suit my body's requirement of oxygen and so the sensations would intensify—along with the anxiety. It was only when I employed the technique I will describe for you later, did I let the body continue doing what it does best—running the whole show.

Importantly, a side-effect of increased breathing, (especially if no actual activity occurs) is that the blood supply to the head is actually decreased. While such a decrease is only a small amount and is not at all dangerous, it produces a variety of unpleasant but harmless symptoms that include dizziness, blurred vision, confusion, sense of unreality, and hot flushes.

Other Physical Effects of Panic Attacks

A number of other effects are produced by the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, none of which are in any way harmful. For example, the pupils widen to let in more light, which may result in blurred vision, or "seeing" stars, etc. There is a decrease in salivation, resulting in dry mouth. There is decreased activity in the digestive system, which often produces nausea, a heavy feeling in the stomach, and even constipation. Finally, many of the muscle groups tense up in preparation for "fight or flight" and this results in subjective feelings of tension, sometimes extending to actual aches and pains, as well as trembling and shaking.

Overall, the fight/flight response results in a general activation of the whole bodily metabolism. Thus, one often feels hot and flushed and, because this process takes a lot of energy, the person generally feels tired and drained.

Mental Manifestations

The goal of the fight/flight response is making the individual aware of the potential danger that may be present. Therefore, when activated, the mental

priority is placed upon searching the surroundings for potential threats. In this state one is highly-strung, so to speak. It is very difficult to concentrate on any one activity, as the mind has been trained to seek all potential threats and not to give up until the threat has been identified. As soon as the panic hits, many people look for the quick and easiest exit from their current surroundings, such as by simply leaving the bank queue and walking outside. Sometimes the anxiety can heighten, if we perceive that leaving will cause some sort of social embarrassment.

If you have a panic attack while at the workplace but feel you must press on with whatever task it is you are doing, it is quite understandable that you would find it very hard to concentrate. It is quite common to become agitated and generally restless in such a situation. Many individuals I have worked with who have suffered from panic attacks over the years indicated that artificial light—such as that which comes from computer monitors and televisions screens—can often trigger or worsen a panic attack, particularly if the person is feeling tired or run down. This is worth bearing in mind if you work for long periods of time on a computer. Regular break reminders should be set up on your computer to remind you to get up from the desk and get some fresh air when possible.

In other situations, when during a panic attack an outside threat cannot normally be found, the mind turns inwards and begins to contemplate the possible illness the body or mind could be suffering from. This ranges from thinking it might have been something you ate at lunch, to the possibility of an oncoming cardiac arrest.

The burning question is: Why is the fight/flight response activated during a panic attack even when there is apparently nothing to be frightened of?

Upon closer examination, it would appear that what we are afraid of are the sensations themselves—we are afraid of the body losing control. These unexpected physical symptoms create the fear or panic that something is

terribly wrong. Why do you experience the physical symptoms of the fight/flight response if you are not frightened to begin with? There are many ways these symptoms can manifest themselves, not just through fear. For example, it may be that you have become generally stressed for some reason in your life, and this stress results in an increase in the production of adrenaline and other chemicals, which from time to time, would produce symptoms. This increased adrenaline can be maintained chemically in the body, even after the stress has long gone. Another possibility is diet, which directly affects our level of stress. Excess caffeine, alcohol, or sugar is known for causing stress in the body (Chapter 5 gives a full discussion on diet and its importance).

Unresolved emotions are often pointed to as possible trigger of panic attacks, but it is important to point out that eliminating panic attacks from your life does not necessarily mean analyzing your psyche and digging into your subconscious. The "One Move" technique will teach you to deal with the present moment and defuse the attack along with removing the underlying anxiety that sparks the initial anxiety.

Before moving to the key of this, let's examine some of the common myths and misinterpretations of an anxiety disorder.

Chapter 2

Myths and Misinterpretations

“Am I going crazy?”

It is understandable for anyone to fear they may be going crazy when they suffer from initial panic attacks. There is so little real public awareness of mental disease, so people often jump to extreme conclusions. These conclusions are usually based on misinformation and an overactive imagination.

The most commonly known mental health issue is schizophrenia—even the word itself strikes terror within the average person.

Schizophrenia is a major disorder characterized by such severe symptoms as disjointed thoughts and speech, babbling, having delusions or strange beliefs (for example, sufferers often claim they are receiving messages from an inner voice), and hallucinations. Furthermore, schizophrenia appears to be largely a genetic disorder and run strongly in families.

Schizophrenia generally begins very gradually, and not suddenly (such as during a panic attack). Additionally, because it runs in families, only a certain proportion of people can become schizophrenic, and in other people, no amount of stress will cause the disorder. A third important point is that people who become schizophrenic will usually show some mild symptoms for most of their lives (such as unusual thoughts, flowery speech, etc.). Thus, if this has not been noticed in you yet, then chances are you will not become schizophrenic. This is especially true if you are over 25, since schizophrenia generally first appears in the late teens to early 20's.

Losing Control

During a panic attack, some people are prone to believe they are going to "lose control." This loss of control can be bodily, i.e., that all your vital organs will completely lose the run of themselves and descend into chaos, or that the individual will mentally lose a grip on reality. Often, it is those who hate being socially embarrassed suffer from this fear the most.

Losing control could range from steering your car into an innocent passerby, or picking up a knife and killing the nearest and dearest person to you (not that we all don't think of this from time to time!).

Put your mind at rest! As scary as those thoughts may be, you are not going to commit any of these acts. Relax. The reason you are experiencing them is because your body feels out of control. Your mind feels that if your body is out of control, it is next on the list.

You are not going to lose it. In fact, I am sure that with all the panic attacks you may have experienced in public places, nobody even noticed you looked uncomfortable. We are, by nature, social animals and dread to be seen in some kind of an embarrassing situation. Jumping up from your chair in a business meeting and screaming for an ambulance may go through your mind, but it is unlikely to happen. In the end, even if we do embarrass ourselves socially, does it really matter? We have to learn to be kind to ourselves. So what if we were to cause a scene and great embarrassment? Life is too short to keep up with appearances all the time. In fact, the more honest you are with your fears, the less pressure you are subjecting yourself under.

Passing Out in Public

The core fear of passing out in public is that we suddenly become so vulnerable, especially if we are alone. Who will look after us as we lie strewn across the

sidewalk? We also dread the thought of passing out for fear that we may never wake but fall into a coma. Passing out is caused by a lack of blood to the brain. When we faint, the body falls to the ground and allows blood to be easily supplied to the brain—which is, again, another of the clever safety mechanisms of the body. Quite simply, fainting during a panic attack is highly uncommon due to the amount of blood that is being circulated. Your heart is usually beating fast and there is little worry that the brain would be short of fresh supply. The dizziness often felt during a panic attack is caused by increased respiration, and while it may be confusing for the individual, it is harmless and does not lead to fainting.

Heart Attacks

This really is a minefield and almost anyone who has suffered from panic attacks at some point will fear for the health of their heart. Let us look at the facts of heart disease and see how this differs from panic attacks.

The major symptoms of heart disease are breathlessness and chest pain, as well as occasional palpitations and fainting. Such symptoms are generally related to the amount of physical effort exerted. That is, the harder you exercise, the worse the symptoms, and the less you exercise, the better.

The symptoms will usually go away quickly if the individual rests. This is very different to the symptoms associated with panic attacks. Certainly, panic symptoms can occur during exercise, but they are different to the symptoms of a heart attack as they occur frequently at rest. Of most importance, heart disease will almost always produce major electrical changes in the heart, which are picked up very obviously by an EKG. In panic attacks, the only change that shows up on the EKG is a slight increase in heartbeat rate.

Sometimes, individuals go through a similar worry about their heart as they do with their breathing. People convince themselves that if they worry enough about their heart, or concentrate too much upon its actions, that it may somehow get confused and forget how to beat correctly. It is quite common for people who suffer from panic attacks to regularly check in on their heart at intervals, to make sure it is still beating away.

It is true that, mentally, we can all affect the pattern of our heartbeats. When you concentrate hard you may notice an irregular beat or two. This is nothing to get upset about. Remember that our bodies have an incredible internal intelligence and simply telling your heart out of panic that it might stop does not mean that it takes any heed of our fears. Learn to become more comfortable with your heart, let it do its job. Listen to it when relaxed and also when exercising. The more comfortable you are with the diversity and range of your heartbeats, the more confidence you will have in it when it is exerting itself.

If you are worried about heart problems, treat yourself to an EKG, and put your mind to rest. If you have had an EKG and the doctor has cleared you, you can safely assume you do not have heart problems. Also, if your symptoms occur at any time and not solely upon exertion, this is additional evidence against a heart disorder.

Unreality/Disconnectedness

There is a symptom not often mentioned in panic attack literature (induced by excessive anxiety) that I would like to discuss. It is the sensation of unreality. Many people become distressed by this sensation and feel they may be losing their mind.

People who experience panic attacks report feeling disconnected from their world, or having a sensation of unreality. The sensation is described as if the world has become nothing more than a projection of a film. This sensation is

quite distressing as it often leads to the individual believing that some permanent damage has been done to their brain, causing these sensations. A typical manifestation of this is when the individual may be having a conversation with someone and suddenly feels alarmingly isolated and removed from the situation. Once the sensation arises it can be so impactful that it takes days to leave the eerie feeling behind and stop thinking about it.

I mention this because the condition is not often spoken about, and to reassure those of you who may have experienced this sensation, that it is only a side-effect of excessive anxiety and will pass as soon as the body learns to relax. Once the body returns to normal and has the opportunity to dispel some excess chemicals produced by the adrenal glands, then this unusual sensation will dissipate. Give it time, and these feelings will subside as you move from a life of anxiety to a more tranquil one.

We have looked at the common characteristics of panic attacks. Now, let's look at how we can defuse the panic.

Chapter 3

The “One Move”

We are all aware of how terrifying a panic attack can feel. Our minds race with the possibility of a mind and body out of control. We put to use every coping mechanism we have, and when they fail, we feel vulnerable and alone with a myriad of confusing bodily sensations and terrifying thoughts.

Let me share with you my insight into panic attacks that turned my life around—from a life of fear into one of courage and true confidence. The technique is subtle and yet I want you to give it careful consideration, as it has not only completely eliminated panic attacks from my life but also the lives of many long-term sufferers. It differs from every other treatment of anxiety disorder that I have come across, in that it tackles the very core of anxiety and panic attacks.

The traditional approach to dealing with anxiety disorders is flawed. People are continuously taught to cope in order to “beat” their anxiety. Coping techniques are numerous and prescribed or taught like “weapons” to overcome the dangerous assailant that is the “panic attack.” Even the term “panic attack” is suggestive of battle and conflict. Panic attacks are described as the outside force that wants to see its sufferers defeated and left feeling isolated. The real truth of the matter is that there is no real attack nor is there an attacker. Panic attacks are not threatening or dangerous; they are an awareness of a series of heightened bodily sensations. But where does the true answer to a panic-free life lie? Does it lie in a continuous battle to thwart the advance of anxiety, or must the sufferer be resigned to always live with a condition that will plague them their whole lives?

The answer was discovered by observing nature. Nature is a great teacher—watch how it deals with opposing forces. The tree bends with the wind, the river flows around the rock, summer gives way to fall. Nature never struggles, never

resists, everything flows with an innate acceptance, and therein lies the key to dealing with panic attacks.

Our primordial instincts tell us to pull away, and guard ourselves from fear. We either fight it with our best coping technique or simply close down and run to a safe refuge. All of these actions create an internal struggle. Like a tug-of-war in the case of a panic attack, we pull and push against the oncoming anxiety with all the resistance we can muster we try and cope/deal with the situation resulting in even further inner stress, fear, and conflict.

We think nervously, "What if I lose this fight?" "What will happen if anxiety wins over me? Will I be hospitalized, or worse, go insane?" As we wrestle with these thoughts, we tighten our mental grip, and pull away from the threat by attempting to suppress the sensations. We may swallow relaxant medication, begin a series of coping exercises, or even drink some alcohol in order to suppress the terrifying feelings that are coursing through our body.

Sometimes, when we are lucky, we are in a good fighting condition and the fear appears to subside. Other times, we lose outrightly and experience full-blown panic attacks as the fear engulfs our emotions and leaves us feeling vulnerable and fearful. Whichever way it transpires, we are always left with one lasting recurring thought: "When will this strike again? When will I have to do battle with this terror again?"

As soon as the telltale signals of a panic attack appear, such as the quickening of breath or the increased heart rate, we immediately jump to try curtail and control the sensations in the hope of enforcing a state of relative tranquillity. Those who suffer from regular panic attacks often mention that their predominant fear is that of losing control of the body or of the mind. We attempt our best to control the situation and by doing so we do not allow our bodies to flow in the heightened bodily functions caused by the fight or flight response. We close down and tighten up our muscles as though we were preparing for a

psychological collision. This preparation for collision is similar to what our body does for a real-world physical collision such as a car crash.

Using a simple car crash analogy, we perceive the imminent danger ahead on the road and we respond with automatic reflexes as adrenaline is released into the bloodstream and apply whichever evasive maneuvers we can in order to avoid the very real threat of a physical impact. The key difference with a panic attack is that there is no real threat. Instead of a quick burst of anxiety that would normally dissipate once the threat is over, a person suffering from panic attacks plays the perceived threat over and over in slow motion, leading to a prolonged state of heightened anxiety.

Before I introduce you to the “One Move” technique, it is important to understand: There is never a damaging psychological or physical collision during a panic attack. It may seem like there is a real and present threat, like the example of a car crash. Remind yourself of all the previous times you have emerged unscathed from panic attacks. Think of all the panic attacks you have experienced and how you have always come out on the other side—possibly petrified, but nevertheless alive and undamaged with no harm done to your body except for possible fatigue. The real issue here that causes most of the upset and understandable distress is the fear of damage that a panic attack is supposed to cause.

So where does this leave us? The first clue to successful recovery lies in our ability to run with a panic attack, to fully engage the experience. To use a cliché, we need to “flow with it” by becoming the observer of fear and anxiety, not the victim.

The fear and panic experienced during high anxiety is a result of the individual reacting to their emotions and identifying with the warning of an “attack,”

believing in a real imminent physical or psychological threat. So the first key in understanding is that there is no panic if there is no perceived threat.

Do you realize there is a big similarity between a panic attack and a roller coaster ride? Both are exhilarating experiences that excite our nervous system and increase our bodily awareness. The roller coaster, however, does not send the same level of panic through us, as we are fully aware that it is not life-threatening and will shortly come to a safe stop. This is the same attitude we need to adopt towards panic attacks. It is only our interpretation that differs. We are looking to change our interpretation.

What does that mean in practical terms? It means if you embrace the fear and let the emotions and sensations run freely through you, rather than close down in the face of an imminent panic attack, your fear immediately subsides. The sensations that usually terrify you become exactly that, sensations, and nothing more, such as sweating palms, dizziness, palpitations, shortness of breath, etc. Uncomfortable sensations you could do without but the key difference with this approach is that the sensations do not lead to a panic attack.

It is not that you will never feel anxious at times; a certain level of anxiety is part of everyday living. What is different is that your occasional anxiety is not developing into a higher anxiety experience. The occasional feeling of anxiety is fine and is experienced by everyone. Your new response is putting you in synch with all those people who never get panic attacks because their feelings do not develop into an exaggerated sense of irrational fear.

So where do we begin? Because there is no danger, there is no real threat. This simple but true understanding combined with the "One Move" technique outlined below will be the tool with which you will learn to defuse panic attacks in seconds!

So let's look at the first step in defusing a panic attack.

- Embrace and accept the fear so the emotions can run freely and dissipate, rather than becoming locked in a vicious cycle of recurring anxiety.

In other words, observe and do not react.

The initial spark of anxiety that triggers a panic attack stems from a struggle within us that is usually at a deeper subconscious level. What caused that initial struggle is irrelevant, as it is as varied as those who suffer from panic attacks and is not necessary to be aware of in order to eliminate panic attacks. By all means visit a psychoanalyst and discover the root of the anxiety, but be aware that this will only give you an awareness of the original trigger and not necessarily result in the curing of your condition. What we are looking for is a conscious recognition of the panic attack, and a new and empowered response to them when they arise. A response that will defuse the panic attack in its tracks and clear the pattern of recurring attacks.

During the initial moments of a panic attack, you will notice some familiar patterns. For many, it may simply be a feeling of unease or tightness in the stomach, a shortness of breath, or tightness of chest. The symptoms usually begin on a very subtle level, sometimes hours or days before the actual attack depending on the situation.

When you feel the initial sensations that usually accompany a panic attack, stop what you are doing and, if possible, find yourself a comfortable place to be alone. This time, however, you are not setting the scene to do battle as before—this time you are preparing a space—an accepting space to invite and welcome the fear and anxiety.

Embrace the fear as it rises within you. Mentally send it a short message telling it that you are glad it has come to visit, you are sending it a warm welcome. Send a message that you are inviting this feeling into your body and mind. Treat

it like an old friend who's coming to visit. You are welcoming it closer because you want to get to know and observe it. It is not unusual to be feeling a little apprehensive at this point, as this new approach may feel unusual—inviting the anxiety closer. You are actually inviting and greeting the panic that normally upsets and terrifies you.

- Be firm. Just watch as the feeling of fear rises and draws nearer.

If you are a visual type, you might want to give the anxiety a mental image such as a troublesome child or ridiculous cartoon character.

Let the fear wash over you. Feel each and every sensation in detail. We are not trying to get away from the panic attack this time—in fact, we are actually trying to fully embrace it.

Keep with the sensations, and watching them like you would with an ocean wave as they fall and rise again throughout your body. The approximate timeframe of each individual panic attack is about twenty minutes.

There will come a point where you can observe and experience to a point, and then it will overwhelm you, you will either want to fight it or retreat to safety. This is understandable as the sensations can often be very uncomfortable. However, this is the vital point in the process. It signals the moment to use the technique that has made all the difference in my life—the “One Move.” At this key moment, when you feel all is lost and you could not continue observing and experiencing the strong sensations, identify the source of your anxiety and demand for more.

MORE?

You're thinking, “You must be kidding!”, “I could hardly stand this, let alone take an increased dosage.”

Demand more! Scream out if you must, but let your anxiety know you are making a firm request that you want to experience the very worst it can throw at you! The request for more is the most empowering statement you make when in the midst of a full-blown panic attack. It sends a clear and strong statement that behind it all you were calling fears bluff, you are still really in control and always have been. You were just observing up until this moment. Like the roller coaster ride you were allowing yourself to feel the experience, the sensations of fear. You were a fully paid-up and willing participant, not a victim. Now you are consciously moving towards the fear, requesting that it shows you more of these unusual bodily sensations you are going through.

Here are some mantra you may use:

"I feel anxious but now show me how it feels like to be really, really anxious."

"Show me how it feels like if my throat and chest feel even tighter."

"I can feel a real knot in my stomach but I wonder what it would be like if it were much tighter, can't you make it tighter? Is that the most you can offer?"

"I notice all kinds of fearful thoughts circling round my mind -make them faster, aren't there any more scary ones?"

This request for more is a request fear cannot deliver. You are voluntarily moving in the same direction of the sensations and giving the fear no momentum to pull on to create the mental struggle and anxiety. This knocks anxiety right on the head as there is no longer any fuel to drive the campaign of terror. The fuse that was dangerously close to exploding into a full-blown panic attack is extinguished. What is more is that this action calls fears bluff, in that the fear driving the whole experience reveals the truth of the situation—there never really was anything to fear in the first place. The threat was a hoax. The panic attack was a dud, there never was a real tangible threat.

Your fear has no option but to retreat. You are allowing it no room to manoeuvre.

It can help to demand more in an aggressive manner. The sensations, of course, are unpleasant and nobody is trying to pretend they are enjoyable—but that does not have to stop you from fully experiencing them. In fact, you have always fully experienced them but this time you are a willing participant. What you are doing is stating with confidence to yourself and your body that you are capable of experiencing these and any amount of increased anxiety that may come your way because you know the truth. There is nothing to fear.

Insist on more.

Fear does not know how to handle this request; it is completely confused by this new response, it has no option but to collapse in on itself and dissipate. Fear feeds off fear; you are extinguishing the fuel on which a panic attack is driven. It now has no struggle, nothing to feed on. For extra measure (as the fear wanes), silently say to your fear, "Is that the best you can do?" Invite it to come back! "Stay, have you nothing else to terrify me with?" As it leaves—which it will—wish it well as it leaves your body and again keep the invitation open for its return. You need to be welcoming of the anxiety to return in order to eliminate lingering thoughts of an unexpected return.

When done correctly, the results of this technique are instantaneous. You will immediately feel the turning point and the parasympathetic nervous system, which we spoke of earlier, coming into action and restoring calm. It is like you have walked out the other side of fear with a new confidence. There was no abyss, no cliff you went tumbling off. All of it was nothing but a series of physical sensations.

You may notice the fear trying to make a comeback, i.e., something terrifying, like a fearful thought crossing your mind. Don't worry. This is just the winding down cycle of the anxiety. Don't let it engage you. Observe it as before, like looking at a cloud passing overhead in the sky, and let it go. Remember, observe and don't react. Remain firm and continue to observe your mind and body. Rest in the knowledge that whatever comes your way, you can handle it. Let that be your daily mantra.

"I can handle any situation life throws my way."

In the beginning you will probably find it hard to believe in yourself to demand more as panic attacks may have eroded some of your self-confidence. This is only natural—you may find yourself asking for more and then immediately running with your hands in the air. Don't let any setback worry you. Practice and practice. If you do not get a result straight away, keep at it; the more you use this technique, the more you will see how empowering it is. In time, you will reach a point where you feel a panic attack approach, and will genuinely welcome it with all your mind and body. You will truly understand that there is nothing to worry about. You will mentally shout out to your anxiety to come in—but by then, it would not. Have you ever noticed that when you are feeling relaxed you cannot make yourself have a panic attack no matter how hard you try? Nor can you force yourself to be wildly ecstatic or terribly gloomy. No matter how hard you force it, you cannot make your body have a panic attack. Now you know the reason why. Moving towards fear eliminates the source of its power.

You may probably be thinking, "No way! I'm not asking for more panic sensations, knowing my luck, that's exactly what I'll get, and it will finally push me over the edge and finish me off." You fear that if you do in fact ask for more fear, more anxiety, that the request will antagonize and create more problems for you.

Trust yourself. Trust in your own body's ability to handle the situation. Apply what you have read here, practise it; it will be your most useful ally in your scariest moments.

Let's take an example and put this into practice.

You are on a train and have just sat down. It has been a long day; you are tired, and are looking forward to sleeping on the journey. The whistle blows and the train doors slam shut with a loud bang. An anxious thought flashes through your mind.

"What if I get a panic attack on this train? How will I cope? I won't be able to get off!"

It begins. Your chest suddenly feels tight; you notice your heartbeat increasing. You quickly look around. Any friendly faces you may be consoled by? None. The initial symptoms of a panic attack begin. So here we go, let's look first at the way you may have been dealing with it in the past:

As your heartbeat increases, you become edgy. You may have learned some breathing techniques, so you put them into effect. One of the problems with breathing techniques, although useful, is that the results never seem quick or apparent enough, so therefore are rarely carried through and continued. Many people don't like to focus on their breathing as they feel this only causes a sense of smothering and increased anxiety.

So the breathing doesn't seem to be working. Most likely, your next move is to get up and walk around. Into the toilet, for example, where you can be alone. Standing up, and walking around makes you feel less trapped. You close the toilet door and sit on the seat.

This feels a little better. It is good to be alone—away from anyone who might witness you in distress and making a fool of yourself. The problem is that you are starting to feel trapped again and you are running out of places to run to. You reach inside your pocket and pull out your emergency relaxant for panic attacks. It may not necessarily have to be a pharmaceutical relaxant; maybe a small bottle of alcohol or even rosary beads. Whatever your last line of defense is, it should better work. If not, you will have to use the ultimate coping strategy—pull the emergency cord and jump off the train. This situation, like most panic attacks, is one of an escalation of panic, and an exhaustion of the coping techniques.

Now, let's try the same scenario with the new understanding:

As you hear the train door slam, the fearful thoughts rise—this time, you don't react with terror, but with simple observation—maybe even slight excitement as you are going to be presented with a new opportunity to learn more about your panic attacks.

I am not saying you are not going to experience fear—that's sometimes unavoidable. But the difference is that whatever you are going to experience, you are going to throw yourself into it—head first. You're a survivor.

Your heart is pounding faster now, and you notice your breathing is becoming short and rapid. You decide to keep feeling all of this—one hundred percent. A thought creeps in, and tells you to get up, move around, go to the bathroom. You decide not to. You tell yourself that if it gets really intense, then you might consider it as a last option. But for the moment, you are going to ride it out where you are.

You are now in the moment of a panic attack. You are now listening to your fearful thoughts and merely experiencing all the unusual bodily sensations. You are pleased with yourself. You realize you are riding the wave of anxiety, and

haven't even begun your first coping technique. Then it intensifies. You start to feel intense fear in your stomach, as your left arm vibrates with pins and needles. You are approaching the climax of high anxiety. You examine all your options—shout out, escape, or invite more. So that's what you do—you ask for more. In fact, you demand with firmness that the panic increases so you experience the full range of the emotion. A few seconds pass. It hasn't intensified so you ask for it again—and once again, nothing. In fact, things are starting to calm down. Your heart isn't racing like before, and your chest feels somewhat lighter. It's coming to an end. Now, you can really feel confident! Not only did you get through a panic attack, but you also ran with it, and experienced it all the way. You stood your ground not in an overly aggressive manner but as an explorer, looking to feel the full range of your experiences. There is no lingering fear of a returning panic attack on your train journey, because you are confident that should one come, you will ride it out like the last. You close your eyes, and relax confidently into your seat.

What you are doing is befriending fear in a nonconfrontational manner. You are inviting it into your life, making it yours. Owning it.

This is a complete U-turn on what has been previously taught. We are normally told to cope using coping techniques, and after a significant period of time, you grow out of your anxiety. Bypass that disempowering approach. Go for the finish line. Try the complete reverse—befriend your fear, and then watch over a short period of time as your anxiety loosens its grip.

This is by no means a new technique. We can see from the past how this was applied to many different areas of living a successful life.

The ancient Chinese martial arts such as aikido use this approach to self-defense. When faced with an attacker, initiates of these defense schools were taught that the greatest defense was never to engage in the first place. Simply observe and walk away. Should an attack ensue after the path of non-resistance

had been tried, the initiates were taught moves such as hand blocks to channel the energy of the aggressor in a harmless way, and let it run its course. Eventually, the aggressor (after finding him/herself flat on the ground one too many times) backs off and retreats. The aggressor becomes harmless. The danger is disarmed.

I describe fear simplistically—like an external force, an aggressor that pays you a visit. The truth is that it is all our own creation—a game we play with ourselves. The fear is an overreaction to bodily sensations. I want to highlight the fact that this is not just a process of simply observing anxiety or, to use a popular term, “floating” with the anxiety. The method of accepting and observing has been written about in other cognitive approaches to dealing with anxiety, but that only makes up the first step of the One Move technique.

In itself, observation is nowhere near powerful enough to stop the attack in its tracks. Simply observing is like sitting immobile on the fence. It is the stance of neutrality, but you may have noticed in the past that being neutral towards the anxiety is not often enough. To really eliminate panic attacks for good, you need an additional element. You need movement. That movement is internal and towards the anxiety and panic attack. Asking for more is such a movement. Because of its simplistic nature, it is a concept that is often dismissed or overlooked by medical professionals.

Do not be confused by the academic jargon used to explain your anxiety disorders. What psychologists and doctors do not explain to you is that the mechanism of anxiety is not a complex issue. Yes, the issues in your life or the chemical reactions in your body that bring about the initial anxiety may be complex, but being able to understand and then defuse the mechanism of anxiety is not a complex process. 33 Steps to Be Anxiety Free is not a solution. It is simply an elaborate list of coping skills. You only need one step, one

movement towards the core of the anxiety. That switch in thinking will get you the results you are looking for.

Remember, the anxiety is not logical. Look at the fears that go through your mind; they have no basis for validity, nor do they follow reason or structure. Panic attacks are flat out illogical; they do not make sense. There is no threat, and yet you still fear the sensations. What you need is an equally illogical solution. In this case, that means doing the opposite of what the logical mind has tried to do all along by fighting the anxiety. You need to implement the One Move.

To summarize, the steps discussed are as follows:

1. When panic arises wherever you may be, simply start to observe it. Do not try and avoid or suppress the bodily sensations.
2. Participate as much as possible in the experience, feel all the sensations as they course through your body. Do not label the sensations as good or bad.
3. When the panic feels it is going to run out of control and your confidence in your ability to observe the fear wanes, perform the "One Move" by inviting your body to experience more. Demand more of the unusual sensations.
4. Stay with it. Repeat the process; keep moving toward the fear by asking for more. Within a short period of time your body will return to normal.

What happens chemically when you have a panic attack, is that you think a thought that says 'you are in extreme danger'. That thought fires your synaptic pathways and launches the fight or flight response. The original thought that launches the entire process comes from the unusual bodily sensations we talked about earlier. What causes this initial sensation is as varied as the people who experience them. For some it is unresolved emotional issues, for others it is diet or bodily changes. The causes or origin of the sensations is not what concerns us right now; it is our reaction to these sensations that causes the anxiety and panic.

So the thought fires in your mind that this is something out of your control. That something really bad is about to happen and you may suffer some terrible damage or even the most irreparable damage of all -death. These fearful thoughts spark the fuse of the imminent panic attack.

-You defuse that threat immediately by disempowering those fearful thoughts.

-You disempower those fearful thoughts by using the One Move. Wrap your whole mind around the technique and really go for it.

The key difference between someone who is cured of panic attacks and those that are not is really very simple. They are not afraid of panic attacks. They see the bodily sensations as sensations and not something to overreact to. I am showing you how to be one of those people.

Here is another interesting way of looking at the One Move technique:

The trick to ending panic and anxiety attacks is to want to have one.- the wanting pushes it away. Can you have a panic attack in this very second? Try hard, I bet you can't.

You have heard the saying 'what you resist persists'. Well that saying applies perfectly to fear. If you resist a situation or experience out of fear, the fear around that issue will persist. How do you stop resisting– you move directly into its path, by doing so it cannot persist. In essence what that means is that if you daily voluntarily seek out a panic attack you cannot have one. You may not realise it but you have always decided to panic. You make the choice by thinking 'this is beyond my control', 'something terrible is about to happen'.

To use a visual analogy; imagine having a panic attack is like standing on a cliff edge. The anxiety it seems is pushing you closer to falling over the edge. Each unusual sensation confirms that something terrible is about to happen and you feel yourself being edged closer and closer to the abyss. There are two options open to you in this scenario.

1. You can turn around and fight your way back to safe ground by using coping techniques and strategies you have learnt previously. You might seek reassurance from a friend or take a dose of medication to help you feel safer. Basically you fight it.
2. or two. You use my technique. You bravely jump!

To be really free of the fear you must metaphorically jump. You must jump off the cliff edge that scares you so much and into all the things that you fear most.

How do you jump – You jump by inviting more of the fear.

Your guaranteed safety is the fact that a panic attack will never harm you. That is medical fact. You are safe, the sensations are wild but no harm will come to you. Your heart is racing but no harm will come to you. The jump

becomes nothing more than a two-foot drop! You have all the safety harnesses you need, in that you never have had anything to fear in the first place. The abyss that lay before you was an illusion.

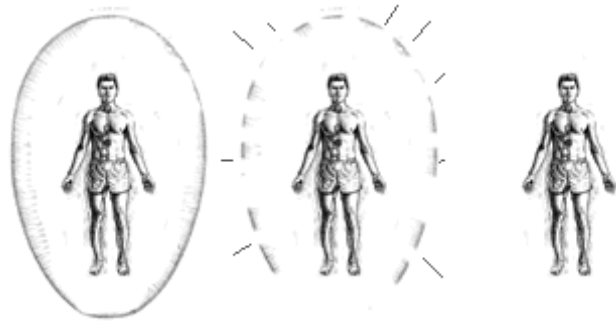
Trust that medical knowledge, feel assured by that- think of all the attacks you have had to date and come out the other end.

So now you are going to treat each and every anxious situation differently. You regularly seek out the panic attack like an adventure seeker. This seeking out the anxiety applies to when you feel yourself bang in the middle of an anxiety episode but it also helps to do it when you feeling fine and relaxed.

Begin right now and for the rest of the day. Go out actually hoping you will have a panic attack! Sounds a bit mad but try it. Feel how empowering that new thinking is for you. Up until now you have dreaded its arrival but now you are chasing it. The fear has nowhere to hide once the tables are turned.

I want you to think of anxiety, as a bubble that surrounds us. When we are in that bubble of fear, our perception of things change and we feel our world getting smaller. We feel quite literally disconnected from the world around us as we look out at it through this bubble of fear. The bubble of fear distorts everyday scenarios. For some, something as simple as going shopping can become terrifying experiences.

Using the "One Move" as described above is very effective because it is like taking a pin and bursting the bubble. Pop!—It bursts the illusion of a real threat. The pin in this imagined scenario is the will or desire to challenge the panic attack, demanding more, calling its bluff. It is the confidence you have deep within yourself that moves you outwards past the bubble of fear and towards life.



Panic Away, you are in the safest of hands!

Chapter 4

In this chapter, I want to give you some examples of how the One Move can be applied to various real life situations. You may have a specific situation that causes you panic and are unsure how the technique can be applied appropriately. Hopefully, this chapter will clarify such issues.

Driving With Anxiety

One of the more common questions I am asked is how to apply the One Move technique to cope with anxiety while driving. Ranging from fear of being caught in traffic to crossing waterway bridges, people have many different fears in this area. Often the anxiety stems from a fear of being trapped in the vehicle in gridlock traffic or losing control of the vehicle and causing a collision.

Needless to say, even though they may have been battling with a driving phobia for many years, almost all of the people I have consulted with have not had their fears of a mishap occur. Let's look at the primary fear, that of having an accident due to the distractions of an anxiety attack while driving.

Most people will work themselves into a state of high anxiety even before they have pulled out of their driveway with imagined scenes of causing ten car collisions on the highway because they "freaked out" and collided with another vehicle. If you have such concerns, the first important thing to begin with is a review of your driving history. Have you been a reckless driver in the past? Have you a history of bad driving? Most phobic drivers in fact have clean driving records and have never even been in a minor road incident. Anxious drivers are not a deadly hazard on the road; in fact, they

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