



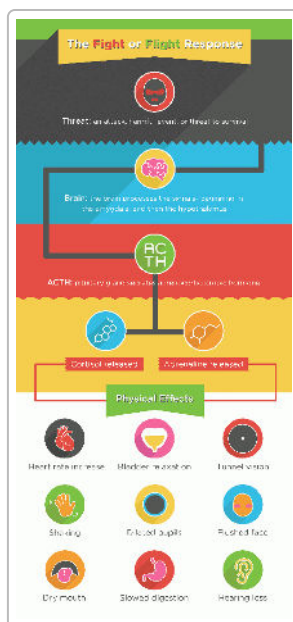
# How to Stop a Panic Attack: A Comprehensive Christian Guide

Panic attacks can be overwhelming and frightening, but there are effective ways to stop or manage them. As Christians, we have the added comfort of our faith and God's promises to help us through these anxious moments. This guide combines **scientific strategies** and **biblical wisdom** to help you find calm during a panic attack and work toward long-term peace in your life. We'll explore what panic attacks are, immediate techniques to defuse them, the role of faith and prayer, and when to seek professional help – all grounded in research and Scripture.

## Understanding Panic Attacks

**What is a Panic Attack?** A panic attack is a sudden episode of intense fear or discomfort that triggers severe physical reactions even though there is no real danger or obvious cause present. According to the Mayo Clinic, a panic attack often comes “*out of the blue*” and can make you feel like you're losing control, having a heart attack, or even dying <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. Typical symptoms include a racing or pounding heartbeat, chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness or lightheadedness, trembling, sweating, chills or hot flashes, nausea, and a sense of impending doom or detachment from reality <sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup>. These sensations usually peak within minutes and then begin to subside. In fact, panic attacks are usually **brief – often peaking around 10 minutes** after onset – and *they are not life-threatening*, despite how scary they feel <sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup>. Knowing that an attack will pass and that it isn't physically dangerous is an important piece of reassurance.

**What Causes Panic Attacks?** Panic attacks represent our body's “fight-or-flight” response kicking in at the wrong time. They can occur with or without an obvious trigger. During a panic attack, the brain's fear center (the amygdala) signals a flood of stress hormones like *adrenaline*, activating the sympathetic nervous system (our alert system). This causes the heart to race, breathing to quicken, muscles to tense, and other physical symptoms <sup>7</sup>. Essentially, your body is reacting as if you're in grave danger when you're not. This may happen due to chronic stress, a traumatic experience, or sometimes for no clear reason at all. Genetics and temperament play a role (for example, those who are very sensitive or who have anxiety disorders in the family may be more prone to panic). Even **strong people of faith are not immune** – experiencing panic or anxiety does **not** mean you are weak in faith. It simply means your mind-body system is temporarily overwhelmed. The Bible acknowledges that the **mind, body, and spirit are connected**; for instance, Proverbs 12:25 notes, “*Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down*”, and the Psalms describe physical distress in times of fear (Psalm 55:4-5). We live in a fallen world where our bodies and minds sometimes react in imperfect ways <sup>8</sup>, but God's word also offers hope and tools to cope.



*The fight-or-flight response causes many of the physical symptoms of panic attacks. During a panic attack, our brain and body behave as if there's a serious threat, releasing hormones like adrenaline that produce symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, shaking, and shortness of breath. Understanding this can help demystify what's happening and remind us that the intense feelings are a false alarm rather than a real danger. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0)*

**How Common Are Panic Attacks?** You are not alone if you experience panic attacks. Approximately **2-5% of the population** will develop panic *disorder* (recurring panic attacks with persistent worry) at some point in their lives <sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>, and many more people experience isolated panic attacks. One Christian counselor noted that an estimated **23 million Americans** suffer from panic attacks in their lifetime <sup>8</sup>. Even biblical figures experienced intense anxiety or fear: *David* often cried out to God in fear (Psalm 55:4-5), *Elijah* had a moment of panic and despair (1 Kings 19:3-4), and *Jesus* Himself experienced agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). The *"battle with anxiety is part of our fallen condition"*, as one pastor wrote <sup>8</sup>, meaning it's a common human struggle – but one that God cares about deeply.

**The Spiritual Perspective:** It's important to understand that having a panic attack is **not a sin** and not a sign that God has abandoned you. The Bible's many commands *"do not be anxious"* (Philippians 4:6) or *"fear not"* (Isaiah 41:10) are meant as loving encouragements, not harsh scoldings. God knows we will feel fear in this life, and He continually reminds us of His presence and help. *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you,"* 1 Peter 5:7 says. Jesus told His followers, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). So while panic attacks can shake us, they do not separate us from God's love. In fact, they can become opportunities to experience God's comfort and the support of others.

Now that we understand what panic attacks are, let's look at **practical steps** you can take in the moment to stop or reduce a panic attack.



## Step-by-Step: How to Calm a Panic Attack

When a panic attack strikes, having a clear plan of action is crucial. Here are **eight practical steps** – supported by both **medical research** and **biblical principles** – that you can use to stop a panic attack or lessen its intensity. Consider printing these steps or saving them on your phone so they're handy when you need them.

**1. Acknowledge What's Happening (and Remind Yourself It Will Pass).** Panic attacks can make you feel *out of control*, but one of the first things to do is recognize: **"This is a panic attack. It is temporary. It will peak and pass."** Remind yourself that the feelings, as awful as they are, *cannot physically harm you*. Medical experts emphasize that panic symptoms, while extremely uncomfortable, are not dangerous and will subside shortly <sup>6</sup> <sup>5</sup>. Tell yourself something like: *"I'm not having a heart attack or going crazy; this will be over in a few minutes."* Acceptance can also help – instead of fighting the panic ("Oh no, not again!"), try to float through it: *"Okay, body, do your thing; it will be over soon."* From a spiritual perspective, this is a moment to **claim God's promises**. For example, *"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me"* (Psalm 23:4). Reminding yourself **God is with you** right now can bring a measure of calm. Remember, *"This too shall pass"* – a phrase often used in anxiety relief – echoes the truth of 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 that our troubles are momentary in light of eternity. **No panic attack lasts forever**; you will make it through with God's help.

**2. Breathe Slowly and Deeply.** One of the most effective immediate tactics is to **control your breathing**. Panic attacks often induce rapid, shallow breathing or hyperventilation, which can worsen feelings of dizziness and chest tightness. Deliberately slowing down your breaths helps reverse the fight-or-flight response. Research shows that *deep diaphragmatic breathing* can stimulate the calming "rest-and-digest" side of your nervous system and reduce anxiety symptoms <sup>11</sup>. Try this: **breathe in deeply for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, and then exhale slowly for a count of 4**. (This is sometimes called "box breathing," visualizing a steady rhythm of in-hold-out-hold in equal lengths.) Another popular method is the **4-7-8 breathing technique**: inhale for 4 seconds through your nose, hold for 7 seconds, then exhale gently for 8 seconds through your mouth <sup>12</sup>. You can repeat these cycles several times. As you do, *focus your mind on the air filling and leaving your lungs*. Perhaps say a brief prayer with each breath – for example, inhale thinking *"Lord, fill me with Your peace"* and exhale *"I cast out my fear."* This combines physical and spiritual calming. **Tip:** If possible, breathe through your belly (expanding your abdomen) rather than shallowly through your chest. Slow breathing like this increases oxygen to your brain and signals your body to relax.

**3. Relax Your Muscles and Release Tension.** Panic often brings *muscle tension* – you might clench your jaw, fists, or feel tightness in your shoulders. Actively working to **relax your muscles** can send feedback to your brain that you are safe. A proven method is **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)**, which has been found effective for anxiety and panic relief <sup>13</sup>. Starting from your toes or your forehead, systematically tense each major muscle group for about 5 seconds, then say "relax" and let the tension go. For example, curl your toes tightly, hold, then release; flex your leg muscles, then release; shrug shoulders to your ears, then release; scrunch your face, then release. Move through your body, one area at a time. This exercise not only distracts you, it also counteracts the adrenaline by physically loosening the body. As you relax each muscle, **breathe out** and imagine stress leaving that part of your body. The **mind-body connection** means if your body calms down, your anxious feelings often diminish too <sup>14</sup>. King David wrote in Psalm 131:2, *"I have calmed and quieted my soul,"* and sometimes calming the body helps quiet the soul. You might even pair a scripture with the exercise: as you release tension, you could pray *"Lord, I surrender this to You"*, symbolically releasing your anxieties to God.

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**4. Ground Yourself in the Present Moment.** Panic attacks can make you feel very *distorted* or disconnected (some people feel outside their body or like the world isn't real). Grounding techniques help re-anchor you to **reality and the present**. One of the best-known grounding tools is the **5-4-3-2-1 method**, which engages all your senses to pull you out of racing thoughts <sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup>. Here's how to do it: look around and **name 5 things you can see**, then **4 things you can hear**, **3 things you can physically feel** (touch), **2 things you can smell**, and **1 thing you can taste**. Do this slowly and deliberately. For example: *"I see a book, a chair, a picture frame, my hands, the floor. I hear the air conditioner, a bird outside, my own breathing, the rustle of my clothes. I feel my feet in my shoes, the cool table surface, the breeze from a fan. I smell fresh cut grass and my coffee. I taste a mint I had earlier."* By the time you've gone through these, your mind is usually more *centered and calm*. Another grounding tip is to **focus on a single object** near you and observe every detail of it (its color, texture, shape) while breathing slowly <sup>17</sup>. Some people carry a small comforting object (a smooth stone, a cross pendant, a familiar photo) in their pocket that they can hold during high anxiety to ground themselves <sup>18</sup>. As Christians, an additional grounding is to focus on **God's presence here and now**. The Psalmist says, *"I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord"* (Psalm 121:1-2). Simply looking up or around and reminding yourself *"God is here with me in this moment"* can be powerfully grounding. You might keep a notecard with a favorite Bible verse (like Isaiah 41:10 or John 14:27) in your wallet to read slowly, grounding yourself in that truth when panic looms.

**5. Use a Calming Phrase or Scripture (Your "Mantra").** Repeating a **soothing phrase** to yourself can help interrupt panic and refocus your mind. Psychologists have found that silently repeating a mantra – a short, reassuring phrase – can reduce feelings of anxiety and stress <sup>19</sup>. For a Christian, the best mantras are God's truths. You might say internally: *"This feeling will pass, God is with me."* Or quote a simple scripture promise, like: *"Fear not, for I am with you... I will strengthen you and help you"* (Isaiah 41:10), or *"The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?"* (Psalm 27:1). One panic survivor said her go-to phrase is: *"God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind"* (see 2 Timothy 1:7) – reminding herself that panic does not define or control her. Another short verse you can breathe in and out is: *"When I am afraid, I put my trust in You"* (Psalm 56:3). The content of the mantra is up to you; the key is that it's **truthful and comforting**. Even the classic *"This too shall pass"* is a helpful reminder. As you repeat your chosen phrase, speak it slowly in your mind and let its meaning sink in. Research notes that mantra repetition can engage similar relaxation responses as meditation <sup>20</sup>. Spiritually, you are *"taking every thought captive"* (2 Corinthians 10:5) and replacing the lies of panic (e.g. "I'm dying" or "I can't handle this") with **God's truth** (e.g. "I will not die but live and declare what God has done" – Psalm 118:17). Over time, a memorized verse can become a reflex that automatically steadies you when anxiety swells.

**6. Change Your Environment (if Possible).** If your surroundings are contributing to the panic (too noisy, crowded, or stressful), see if you can **shift to a calmer location**. For example, if you feel panic rising in a packed room, step outside into the fresh air or find a quiet hallway or corner to collect yourself <sup>21</sup>. Sometimes simply leaning against a wall or sitting down can provide a sense of stability. By moving away from triggers (like exiting a heated meeting or turning off a disturbing news report), you reduce sensory overload. Find a **peaceful spot** where you feel safer – maybe a bench outside, your parked car, or even a bathroom stall for a few minutes. While you're in that calmer space, focus on the coping steps (breathing, grounding, prayer). **Note:** If you're driving when a panic attack hits, it's wise to pull over safely if you can, rather than trying to push through while driving in distress. In any environment, consider using **soothing sensory input**: listen to gentle worship music or nature sounds on your phone, rub a drop of calming lavender oil on your wrist (if you find that scent relaxing), or splash cool water on your face. These small actions can help signal your brain to slow down. Jesus Himself would step away from crowds to pray and



find renewal (Luke 5:16). There is no shame in *pausing and changing your setting* briefly to help stop a panic attack.

**7. Walk it Off (or Do Light Exercise).** As adrenaline surges during panic, your body is primed to either fight or run. Doing something active can actually help **burn off that adrenaline** and use it up in a constructive way. If you are able, consider **walking gently for a few minutes**. Walking has a natural rhythm that can regulate breathing and release tension. It also removes you from the immediate scene of panic if that environment was a trigger <sup>22</sup>. Some people find that a short walk outside, feeling the ground under their feet, helps them feel more grounded and in control. Exercise, even mild, releases **endorphins** – “feel-good” hormones that combat stress <sup>23</sup>. Over the long term, regular exercise is known to reduce overall anxiety levels <sup>23</sup>. If walking isn’t an option at the moment of panic, try doing a set of **light stretches** right where you are, or even a few jumping jacks or push-ups if you’re in a private space. It might sound odd, but using your large muscles can discharge some of the nervous energy. One caution: at the peak of a panic attack, strenuous exercise might *temporarily* increase sensations like heart rate, which could alarm you – so stick to moderate intensity. A brisk walk, a slow jog in place, or simple movements are sufficient. As you move, you might pray something like, “*Lord, as I walk, calm my heart and mind*”. Many find a healing connection in **nature walks** – stepping outside to notice God’s creation (the sky, trees, birds) can remind you that the world is bigger than this moment and that the Creator cares for you (Matthew 6:26-34). “*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him*” (Psalm 37:7) can sometimes happen *after* we’ve walked off the initial panic and are ready to be still. So, if you can, walk it off.

**8. Reach Out for Support.** Panic attacks can feel isolating, especially if you’re surrounded by people who don’t know what’s happening. But telling **someone you trust** can make a huge difference. If you’re with a friend or family member, calmly say, “I’m having a panic attack. Can you help me find a quiet spot and just sit with me for a few minutes?” A true friend will want to help – they could pray with you, help you breathe slowly, or simply reassure you that you’re going to be okay. If you’re alone, consider calling or texting a supportive person and letting them know you’re in a moment of high anxiety. Just hearing a calm voice on the phone can be grounding. From a practical standpoint, if panic attacks frequently occur in a certain setting (like at work or church), it may help to **inform a colleague or leader** about it ahead of time <sup>24</sup>. For example, you might tell a trusted coworker or your pastor, “I sometimes get panic attacks. If you see me step out or looking panicked, I’d appreciate if you could just walk with me or give me a moment.” This way, if an attack strikes, you already have someone who knows what’s happening and can assist – whether that’s helping you get some air or simply not panicking *about* your panic. The Bible encourages us to “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2) and to “encourage the fainthearted, help the weak” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). There is *nothing* weak or unchristian about asking for help during an anxiety episode. In fact, it can be an opportunity for others to show Christ’s love to you. If your panic attacks are severe and frequent, create a **support network** – maybe have a designated “prayer partner” you can text when you feel anxiety spiking, or join a Christian support group for anxiety where people understand and can pray for you in the moment. Sometimes just knowing “*I have people I can turn to*” reduces the fear of having an attack.

**9. (If Prescribed) Use Medication as Directed.** (*This step may not apply to everyone, but it’s important for those who have been given medical tools.*) If your doctor has prescribed a fast-acting **anti-anxiety medication** for panic attacks – such as a benzodiazepine (e.g. alprazolam/Xanax or lorazepam/Ativan) or a beta-blocker like propranolol – *do not hesitate to use it* when needed and as directed <sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup>. These medications can quickly reduce the acute symptoms of panic. For example, a low dose of a benzodiazepine might take effect in 10-15 minutes, easing the intense fear and physical symptoms. A beta-blocker can slow a racing heart and lessen shaking. **Using medicine is not a failure or a lack of faith.** Just as we would take



insulin for diabetes or use an inhaler during an asthma attack, medication for panic is a tool God can provide through medical wisdom. The decision to use medication should be made with your healthcare provider, and it's usually intended for short-term or "as-needed" relief (because some of these drugs can be habit-forming if misused <sup>27</sup>). If you have it, take it at the earliest sign of an attack as instructed rather than waiting until the peak of panic. While it takes effect, continue using the other coping strategies (breathing, grounding) so you're actively managing the situation from both angles. There should be **no stigma** in a Christian's mind about this – in fact, refusing legitimate help would be unwise pride. The Bible praises doctors and medicine in principle (Jesus said *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick"*, Mark 2:17), and one of the Gospel writers (Luke) was a physician. If you're concerned about using medication, pray for guidance, talk to a trusted spiritual mentor **and** a medical professional. Many believers have found that a short-term use of medication gives them the window of relief needed to apply therapy techniques or simply to regain normalcy. Whether or not you personally use meds, **respecting medical treatment is wise** – as one biblical counseling leader put it, we should take seriously the "warning signs" God built into our bodies and be open to medical intervention as a gift from Him <sup>28</sup>.

Those are the immediate steps that can help *stop a panic attack in its tracks*. You might not need all of them every time – find the ones that work best for you and make them your personal toolkit. For example, some people primarily focus on breathing and prayer; others find grounding exercises indispensable. **Experiment in non-anxious times** (practice deep breathing or reciting verses each day) so that when anxiety hits, these skills feel more natural.

Before moving on, let's consider a brief **real-life example** of how these techniques and faith can work together:

**Case Study:** *"Alex," a 40-year-old Christian father, had panic attacks up to 3 times per week, often in the evenings. He would experience a racing heart, chest tightness, and intense fear that "something terrible" was happening. Alex decided to apply a combined approach of faith and practical strategies. He met with a Christian counselor who taught him breathing exercises and helped him memorize a few Bible verses about peace. He also saw his doctor, who prescribed a low-dose anti-anxiety medication to use if an attack became overwhelming. Over the next 3 months, Alex diligently practiced 4-7-8 breathing every morning and evening, did progressive muscle relaxation at bedtime, and during panic episodes he would repeat the verse "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you... Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:27) while focusing on a grounding object (a small cross in his pocket). He also took the medication on two occasions when the panic was very intense. Gradually, Alex's panic attacks reduced from 3 per week to about 1 mild attack per month. He also reported that even when he felt a wave of panic coming, he was able to stop it within 5-10 minutes by using his techniques, whereas before it might disable him for half an hour or more. This improvement allowed him to resume his evening family prayer time (which he used to skip out of anxiety) and he even started helping lead a small group at church again, feeling more confident that panic would not control him.*

Every person's journey will be unique, but **there is hope**. With practice, the strategies above can significantly reduce the power of panic attacks. Most importantly, remember that *you are never facing these moments alone*. *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1).

Next, we'll discuss longer-term approaches to reduce anxiety and panic frequency, and how to integrate **faith, therapy, and lifestyle** to find greater joy and peace.

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## Biblical Encouragement for Overcoming Anxiety

While using immediate coping tools, don't neglect the deeper **spiritual tools** at your disposal. As Christians, we have access to *supernatural comfort* and strength through our relationship with God. Here are some biblical encouragements and practices to help your heart and mind in the battle against panic and anxiety:

- **Prayer and Surrender:** *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"* (Philippians 4:6-7). Make it a habit to talk to God when you feel anxious – even **during** a panic attack, you can cry out, *"Lord, help me!"* There is power in simply calling on Jesus' name. As you pray and consciously hand over your fears to Him, *"the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Phil 4:7). It may not always be instantaneous, but God **promises peace** to those who trust Him. One study found that people who pray to a God they perceive as loving and protective tend to have **fewer anxiety symptoms**, because they feel a secure attachment and comfort in God's presence <sup>29</sup> <sup>30</sup> . In other words, knowing God is truly caring and "for you" is key – so when you pray, focus on His compassionate character. As 1 Peter 5:7 assures, *"He cares for you."* If you struggle with believing this (perhaps panic makes you feel abandoned or punished), spend time meditating on verses about God's fatherly love (Matthew 6:26-34, Romans 8:15-16, Psalm 103:13-14).
- **Truth from Scripture:** Jesus countered Satan's temptations with Scripture, saying *"It is written..."* (Matthew 4:4). In the same way, we can counter the lies of anxiety with God's written Word. **Memorize a few key verses** that speak to fear and anxiety, so you can recall them in a time of need. Here are a few powerful ones to consider:
  - *Isaiah 41:10* – *"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."* (A promise that God's presence and support are with you in scary moments.)
  - *2 Timothy 1:7* – *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind."* (A reminder that fear is not from God; He gives you a spirit of calm and self-control.)
  - *John 14:27* – *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you... Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."* (Jesus' own words offering His peace, which we can claim by faith.)
  - *Psalm 34:4* – *"I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears."* (An encouragement that God responds when we seek Him, and He can deliver us from fear.)
  - *Psalm 94:19* – *"When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought me joy."* (God's comfort can soothe our anxious heart.)
  - *Philippians 4:13* – *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (Applicable when you feel, *"I can't handle this"* – yes, with Christ's strength, you can get through even a panic attack.)

Write your favorite verses on index cards or in the notes app of your phone. Read them daily. When panic or anxious thoughts start to creep in, **speak these scriptures out loud** if you can. There is something steadying about hearing truth in your own voice. Remember Hebrews 4:12 says *"the word of God is alive and active... it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* God's Word can cut through the chaotic thoughts of panic and bring them into alignment with His peace <sup>31</sup> . It's essentially *"spiritual cognitive therapy"* – replacing anxious thinking with God's thinking.

- **Worship and Thanksgiving:** It might be the last thing you *feel* like doing in a moment of anxiety, but worship can powerfully shift your focus from fear to God's greatness. Consider playing a favorite

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worship song that brings you peace (perhaps something like “It Is Well,” “Be Still My Soul,” or any song that reminds you of God’s sovereignty). Sing along if you’re able. **Thank God** in the midst of your trial – *“Lord, thank You that You are here with me; thank You for the breath in my lungs; thank You that this will pass.”* Gratitude is a known anxiety-reducer, and it’s biblically commanded as part of how we handle anxiety (Philippians 4:6 says to pray *“with thanksgiving”*). Many have found that when they start praising God or thanking Him deliberately, the grip of panic lessens. God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3) – when you praise, you invite His calming presence.

- **Community and Counsel:** Don’t battle anxiety in isolation. Sometimes **God’s answer to our prayers for peace comes through people** – a wise counselor, a support group, or a praying friend. Seek out fellowship with believers who can encourage you. You might find comfort in knowing that others at your church have walked similar paths (you may be surprised how many have quietly struggled with anxiety or panic). If you haven’t already, consider seeing a **Christian counselor or pastor** who can pray with you and provide guidance. They can help you apply Scripture to the root issues that may underlie your anxiety, such as perfectionism, past trauma, or false beliefs about yourself or God. They can also teach you additional coping skills. In Exodus 17, when Moses grew too weary to hold up his hands in battle, Aaron and Hur came alongside to hold them up for him – that’s a beautiful picture of how the Body of Christ can support someone struggling under the weight of anxiety. Don’t hesitate to say, *“I need help.”* Galatians 6:2, again, *“Bear one another’s burdens.”*
- **Faith in God’s Plan:** Part of panic attack fear is *“fear of the fear”* – worrying when the next attack will come, or feeling ashamed and asking “Why me?”. Here it helps to zoom out and remember that God can redeem *anything* for good (Romans 8:28). Many Christians testify that their season of anxiety ultimately led them into a deeper dependence on God and a richer understanding of His grace. It doesn’t mean God caused the panic attacks, but He *can use* them to refine your faith. James 1:2-4 talks about considering trials as joy because they produce perseverance and maturity. You may not be at a point of feeling “joy” about panic attacks, and that’s okay – God’s not expecting you to enjoy them! But try to maintain a hopeful outlook that *this struggle can strengthen you*. Each time you practice coping and experience God’s help, you build confidence for the future. Over time, you might even be able to comfort others with the comfort you’ve received (2 Corinthians 1:4).

In summary, **immerse yourself in God’s presence and promises**. Spiritual growth doesn’t replace practical techniques – and vice versa – rather, they work hand-in-hand. As you quote scripture and pray, you’re calming your soul; as you breathe and ground yourself, you’re calming your body. Together, these tackle panic from all angles: *“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You”* (Isaiah 26:3). Keep your mind steadfast on Him, using the tools He’s given, and His peace will grow in you.

## Long-Term Strategies for Preventing Panic Attacks

Stopping a panic attack in the moment is crucial, but it’s equally important to address the bigger picture: **how can you reduce the frequency or intensity of panic attacks over time?** What steps can you take to *“be anxious for nothing”* as a lifestyle, not just in crisis? Here we will look at long-term strategies, including professional treatments and healthy habits, and see how they align with faith.

1. **Identify and Manage Your Triggers.** Sometimes panic attacks seem random, but often there are **patterns or triggers**. Take note of when and where your panic attacks occur. Common triggers might include certain stressful situations (crowds, driving on highways, enclosed spaces like elevators), specific

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thoughts or memories, physical cues (like too much caffeine or not eating, which can create sensations similar to anxiety), or even positive changes (new job, becoming a parent – anything overwhelming). By identifying triggers, you can either **avoid** them when prudent or **work on facing them gradually** to desensitize the fear. For example, if heavy coffee consumption triggers your panic, cutting back caffeine might dramatically reduce attacks. If being in a crowded store is a trigger, you could practice exposure by going for short periods during off-peak times, gradually increasing as you learn coping skills. Some triggers you can't avoid (like unexpected news or conflicts), so the key is to *manage your response*. This is where **therapy** can help (more on that soon). But even on your own, keeping a journal of your panic episodes and what preceded them can reveal useful patterns. Note that **sometimes there is no clear trigger** – and that's okay too <sup>32</sup>. It doesn't mean you're doing something wrong; it may be more of an internal physiological reaction. In such cases, focus on overall stress reduction and the other strategies below. Bring your self-knowledge to God in prayer: *"Search me, God, and know my heart... See if there is any anxious way in me, and lead me"* (Psalm 139:23-24). He can help you pinpoint triggers and guide you in healing from them.

**2. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT).** Therapy is **highly effective** for panic disorder and anxiety. In particular, **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** is considered a gold standard treatment. Through CBT, a trained counselor helps you identify negative thought patterns (like catastrophic thinking: *"I'll die if I have a panic attack in public"* or *"I'm losing my mind"*) and replace them with **truth-based thoughts**. You also learn behavioral techniques to face fears gradually. Studies have shown that around **70–80% of patients with panic disorder improve significantly with CBT** – many become panic-free or have greatly reduced attacks after a course of therapy <sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup>. From a Christian perspective, CBT's goal of "renewing the mind" (Romans 12:2) fits well with biblical principles. It's about learning to *"take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5). For example, instead of the thought *"I'm going to suffocate"*, you learn to tell yourself *"This is just anxiety; I can still breathe, and this will pass."* A Christian therapist can even integrate scripture into this process. Additionally, CBT often involves **exposure exercises** – gradually and safely confronting the sensations or situations you fear (with a therapist's guidance) so that your brain learns they are not truly dangerous. This can break the panic cycle. If you have access to a licensed counselor (many are available via telehealth now), it's absolutely worth pursuing. There is no shame – it is wise to seek counsel (Proverbs 15:22). Think of therapy as "training" or "discipleship" for your mental habits. With some effort over weeks or months, you can see tremendous progress. Many people who put in the work find they regain parts of life anxiety had stolen – whether it's driving again, sleeping peacefully, or engaging socially without fear. If cost is a concern, check if your church or community offers counseling on a sliding scale, or look into support groups (even free Anxiety Recovery groups exist, some in churches).

**3. Medication for Prevention.** We discussed emergency medications earlier, but there are also daily medications that can help *prevent* panic attacks if they are frequent or debilitating. The most common are **antidepressants** in the SSRI or SNRI categories (such as sertraline, paroxetine, or venlafaxine). These aren't addictive and can help stabilize the serotonin levels in your brain, which often reduces the tendency to have attacks. It typically takes a few weeks for them to start working, and you would be under a doctor's supervision for dosage and duration. Approximately **80% of patients** with panic disorder respond well to treatment – often a combination of medication and therapy <sup>10</sup> – though some trial and error may be needed to find the right medication. As a Christian, taking an antidepressant is a personal decision, but it can be viewed as a **part of God's healing provision**. If you had a thyroid issue, you might take thyroid hormone; if you have an anxiety disorder, an SSRI might correct a chemical imbalance. These medications are not "happy pills" – you still might feel normal stress, but they can take the edge off extreme anxiety. Always consult with a healthcare provider about benefits and side effects. Some people use them short-term (6-12 months) while learning skills in therapy, then taper off; others stay on longer for maintenance.



There is **no one-size-fits-all**. What's important is to pray for wisdom, consult trustworthy professionals, and not rule out a tool that could greatly improve your quality of life. Using medicine does not mean you lack faith in God – often it means you have *faith that God can work through many channels*, including science. If you do start a medication, you can even pray something like, “Lord, I thank You for this medicine, and I ask that You use it to bring me stability. My hope is still in You.” Your ultimate trust is in Him, and He can use the medicine as an instrument of His grace.

**4. Healthy Lifestyle Habits.** Our daily habits have a significant impact on anxiety levels. Consider the following changes, which research and **industry guidelines** (like those from health organizations) recommend for managing anxiety <sup>35</sup> : - **Limit Stimulants:** Caffeine, nicotine, and certain other substances can trigger or worsen anxiety. Caffeine in coffee, energy drinks, or even high amounts of tea can produce jitters and rapid heartbeat that mimic panic. If you suffer panic attacks, try reducing or eliminating caffeine, or switch to decaf/herbal alternatives. Likewise, smoking or using nicotine can exacerbate anxiety (even though smokers sometimes feel it calms them, physiologically it raises heart rate and stress hormones over time). Some people find their panic attacks dropped dramatically after quitting smoking. Be mindful of sugar as well – a sugar rush and crash can affect mood. Alcohol might seem to calm nerves initially, but it can disrupt sleep and rebound anxiety the next day; use in moderation or not at all if you have panic disorder. - **Regular Exercise:** We touched on walking during an attack, but regular exercise (150 minutes a week of moderate activity, for example) has been shown to decrease overall anxiety and improve mood <sup>23</sup> <sup>36</sup> . Cardio exercises like jogging, swimming, or even brisk walking release endorphins that are natural stress-busters. Exercise also improves sleep and confidence. Choose activities you enjoy – maybe group sports, dancing, cycling, or simply nature hikes. The Bible likens our faith journey to a race (Hebrews 12:1); taking care of our bodily “temple” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) through exercise can strengthen us for the race. - **Adequate Sleep:** Lack of sleep can lower your resilience to stress and make you more prone to anxiety. Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Establish a calming bedtime routine – dim lights, no screen time the last hour before bed (blue light can provoke the brain), perhaps read Scripture or journal to unload worries onto God (1 Peter 5:7) before sleep. Some find playing soft worship music or an audio Bible can create a peaceful atmosphere. If insomnia or night-time panic attacks are an issue, mention it to your doctor; sometimes addressing sleep apnea or using certain therapies for insomnia can reduce panic frequency. - **Nutrition and Hydration:** Low blood sugar or dehydration can mimic anxiety symptoms (like lightheadedness or heart palpitations). Eat balanced meals and snacks at regular intervals. Emphasize foods that support steady blood sugar: proteins, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish, flaxseed, etc.) have some evidence of helping mood. Stay hydrated with plenty of water. Some people also explore herbal supplements (like chamomile, magnesium, or valerian) for general anxiety – *use caution and consult a doctor*, as “natural” doesn’t always mean safe or effective for everyone. Small changes like cutting out overly processed foods or excessive sugars might help your body handle stress better. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “*whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*” Treat eating as a way to honor God by fueling the body He gave you, and it may help quell anxiety. - **Stress Management & Rest:** Broader stress management is key. Chronic stress can set the stage for panic attacks. Evaluate your commitments and see if there are areas you can set healthier boundaries. It’s okay to say *no* sometimes! Make time for **rest and Sabbath** – God designed us to need regular rest (Mark 6:31). Practices like taking a Sabbath day off work, enjoying hobbies, spending time in nature, or doing creative activities can all lower your baseline anxiety. Consider relaxation techniques such as gentle yoga or stretching, warm baths, massage therapy, or breathing meditation exercises as part of your routine. These are not unchristian; they are simply caring for your body. In fact, quiet meditation on God’s Word is encouraged in Scripture (Psalm 1:2). Many Christians find that Christian mindfulness – being still in God’s presence, focusing on His goodness – can retrain an over-anxious mind to find peace. - **Community & Service:**



Engage in supportive community regularly. Isolation can worsen anxiety, while positive social support can buffer it. Attend church, join a Bible study or fellowship group where you can share and pray for each other. Sometimes helping others through volunteering or acts of service can lift your eyes off your own fears and give a sense of purpose, which reduces anxiety. Of course, don't over-commit to the point of stress; but a healthy involvement in serving God and others often brings joy that pushes out some of our own worries.

**5. Faith-Based Counseling or Pastoral Support:** In addition to standard therapy, you might seek out a **Christian counselor** or a mature mentor at church for ongoing encouragement. They can help integrate biblical truth with cognitive techniques. There are also deliverance or healing prayer ministries if you feel your anxiety has a spiritual warfare component (for instance, persistent irrational fear could sometimes involve spiritual oppression). A balanced Christian perspective recognizes that we are whole people – body, soul, and spirit. Panic attacks can be influenced by physical factors (brain chemistry, etc.), emotional factors (stress/trauma), and spiritual factors (fear as a weapon of the enemy, or a trial allowed by God for growth). Addressing all three dimensions is ideal. For some, praying with church elders or having people pray over them brought significant relief (James 5:14 talks about calling the elders to pray when someone is unwell). Just ensure any spiritual counsel you seek stays grounded in Scripture and doesn't shame you for having anxiety. Unfortunately, some well-meaning Christians might say things like "Just pray more" or suggest you must have sin causing it. While unconfessed sin **can** cause inner turmoil, it's not always the case – remember Job's friends wrongly accused him of sinning to deserve his suffering, when in fact Job was righteous. Anxiety can hit the most devout believers. If you do suspect guilt or sin is weighing on you (Psalm 32:3-4 describes anxiety from hidden sin), then by all means repent and receive God's forgiveness, and that might lift a burden. But if not, don't accept false guilt. The goal is to let **God's grace** and truth into every corner of your struggle. Romans 8:1 assures, *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* So any guidance that heaps condemnation is not from God.

**6. Plan for Setbacks with God's Grace.** Overcoming panic attacks is usually not a straight line upward. There may be setbacks – a bad week, a panic episode after months of none, or a situation that still triggers you. That's okay. It doesn't erase the progress you've made. In those moments, avoid negative self-talk (*"I failed"* or *"I'll never get better"*). Instead, extend grace to yourself as God does. Recall Elijah, who after a great victory still fell into fear and despair (1 Kings 19) – God gently cared for him, providing rest and nourishment and a still small voice to renew him, not an angry rebuke. If you have a setback, treat it as an opportunity to revisit what helped before, and maybe learn something new about yourself. You might journal the experience: *What do I think led up to it? Which techniques did I use, and what could I try differently?* This way, even setbacks become stepping stones. Keep hopeful: many people fully recover or significantly improve from panic disorder. As one clinical statistic, about **39% of people** become completely panic-free long-term and most others have only occasional manageable attacks with treatment <sup>37</sup>. Spiritually, you can trust that *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion"* (Philippians 1:6). Your healing journey is in God's hands.

Finally, it's worth noting that **seeking professional help is not a lack of faith**; it can be an *act* of faith – faith that God will work through those resources. Even biblical counselors affirm the value of medical insight and not ignoring the physical components of anxiety <sup>28</sup>. So if your panic attacks are frequent, very intense, or causing you to avoid important parts of life, don't hesitate to consult a doctor or therapist. As the proverb says, *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed"* (Proverbs 15:22). Getting help is a wise plan.



## Conclusion: Hope for a Future of Peace

Living with panic attacks can be a draining and scary experience, but **there is hope and help for you**. By combining **practical strategies** (like breathing, grounding, and muscle relaxation) with **spiritual support** (prayer, Scripture, and God's comfort), you can weather the storm of a panic attack and gradually see them lose their hold on your life. Remember that improvement often happens step by step. Celebrate small victories – maybe you endured a panic wave without fleeing the situation, or you had one less attack this month than last, or you used to fear going to the grocery store and now you can do it with minimal anxiety. Each of those is a win worth thanking God for.

Also, keep in mind the bigger picture: God's will for you is *not* a life crippled by fear, but a life of **joy, peace, and purpose**. Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10). An abundant life in Him is **very much possible**, even if you have struggled with anxiety. Many believers who once were paralyzed by panic can testify to living full lives now – not that they never feel anxious, but it no longer controls them. The same God who calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:39) can calm the storms in your mind and heart. Sometimes He does it instantly, more often He does it through a journey (much like He led the Israelites through the wilderness teaching them dependence before reaching the Promised Land). Either way, *He is with you in every step. "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you,"* says the Lord (Hebrews 13:5).

As you continue to practice the techniques and lean on the Lord, expect that His peace will increase in you. It may start as a small seed – one calm moment in prayer today – and grow into a steady fruit of the Spirit in your character (Galatians 5:22, the fruit including peace and self-control). Don't be discouraged by occasional bad days; healing is rarely linear. Instead, look back periodically and see how far God has brought you. Keep a journal of prayers and answered prayers – you might be amazed that what panicked you six months ago hardly fazes you now, by God's grace.

In closing, let's recall Philippians 4:6-7 once more, because it encapsulates God's desire for us in anxiety: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."* That's our part – choosing prayer over perpetual worry, with a thankful heart. Then comes God's promise: *"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Imagine that – God's peace standing guard like a soldier at the door of your heart and mind, pushing back the disturbances. That is what He offers. It might surpass our understanding (meaning it might not even make sense how we can have peace in chaos, but it's real). Cling to that promise.

You are on a journey not just to stop panic attacks, but to deepen your **relationship with Jesus**, the Prince of Peace. Through this struggle, you may come to know Him more intimately as comforter and deliverer. And as you find techniques that help your panic, consider them gifts from Him – tools He's provided so you can live in the freedom He wants for you. *"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way"* (2 Thessalonians 3:16). Amen.

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within minutes, with 4 or more symptoms) <sup>40</sup>, and an explanation of the fight-or-flight physiological response involving the amygdala, adrenaline release, and sympathetic nervous system activation leading to symptoms <sup>7</sup>. This helped in explaining the biology of panic attacks in lay terms.

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Each of these sources contributed to creating a well-rounded answer that respects both **modern medical knowledge** and **Christian faith principles**. By applying these insights, you can develop a personalized approach to stopping panic attacks and experience the *"peace of God"* guarding your heart and mind.

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