



Panic Attacks: Finding Peace and Healing Through Faith and Understanding

What Is a Panic Attack?

Panic attacks are sudden, intense episodes of fear that trigger severe physical reactions in the absence of real danger. Many people describe feeling as if they are having a heart attack or "going crazy" during a panic attack. Common symptoms include a racing or pounding heartbeat, shortness of breath, sweating, trembling, chest pain, nausea, dizziness, tingling in extremities, and an overwhelming sense of impending doom or loss of control. In fact, the sensations can be so alarming that it's not unusual for someone in the grip of a panic attack to show up at an emergency room, convinced they are in mortal peril [3] . The good news is that **panic attacks, though terrifying, are not inherently dangerous medically** – they do not cause heart failure or stop one's breathing, even if it feels that way [18] . They typically peak within 10–15 minutes and then subside on their own.

Panic attacks are more common than you might think. Mental health experts estimate that **at least one-third of people will experience a panic attack at some point** in their lives [17] . In the United States alone, about **1 in 10 people experiences a panic attack in any given year**, meaning if you suffer these episodes, you are far from alone [29] . Most people will only have one or a few isolated panic attacks in their lifetime, often during periods of intense stress. However, some develop *panic disorder*, where attacks recur unexpectedly and lead to persistent worry about future attacks. Doctors diagnose **Panic Disorder** when a person has frequent, unprompted panic attacks and begins to fear having more, sometimes avoiding places or situations (like driving or crowded areas) they associate with past attacks [10] . Roughly 1–3% of the population develops panic disorder at some point [10] . It's a recognized medical condition – defined in the **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)** – and not a personal weakness or failing.

A panic attack can feel overwhelming and frightening, with intense physical symptoms that mimic a heart attack.

The Physiology of Panic: When Your Body Goes into "Fight-or-Flight"

To understand why panic attacks feel so dreadful, it helps to know what's happening in the body. A panic attack is essentially **the "fight-or-flight" stress response** firing at the wrong time. God designed our bodies with an alarm system to protect us from danger – a cascade of neurological and hormonal changes that prepare us to face a threat or flee from it [2] . This response starts in the brain. When we perceive danger (whether truly life-threatening or not), the *amygdala*, the brain's emotional processing center, sounds the alarm to another region called the *hypothalamus* [2] . The hypothalamus then activates the **sympathetic nervous system**, like pressing a gas pedal, which triggers the adrenal glands to release **adrenaline (epinephrine)** and other stress hormones into the bloodstream [2] .



Adrenaline causes immediate physical changes: the heart beats faster and blood pressure rises to send blood quickly to muscles and vital organs; breathing accelerates and airways expand to intake more oxygen; senses sharpen and pupils dilate; glucose (sugar) is released into the bloodstream for a burst of energy [2] . This **acute stress reaction** is incredibly useful if you're truly in danger – for example, if you need to escape a burning building or react to an oncoming car, the surge of adrenaline helps you move swiftly and with heightened focus. However, in a panic attack, this reaction is triggered by a false alarm.

Researchers describe panic attacks as the brain and body being “out of sync” – a normal fear response occurring when it's not actually needed [3] . It can start from the mind or the body. Sometimes a person's thoughts (for instance, imagining a worst-case scenario) set off the alarm; other times a harmless physical sensation (like a sudden jolt of caffeine or a slight lightheaded feeling) might trigger the cycle of fear [3] . One clinical neuropsychologist explains it this way: **panic is often a “normal physiological fear response happening at a totally inappropriate time.”** Your brain misinterprets something as danger, and the whole fight-or-flight cascade kicks in, “*sending your body's fear response into overdrive.*” [3]

During a panic attack, **the physical symptoms feed back into the fear loop**. For example, you notice your heart racing or your chest tightening, and then you become more frightened, thinking “I must be having a heart attack” or “I'm losing control.” This fearful interpretation only pours fuel on the fire, increasing the panic. Psychologists call this “**fear of fear**” – being afraid of the bodily sensations of anxiety itself [5] . In fact, one expert noted, “*Ultimately, panic attacks are just fear of fear.*” Learning not to catastrophize these sensations is a key to breaking the cycle. It's reassuring to remember that as intense as the symptoms are, they will pass and **they are not lethal**. As Scripture reminds us, “*Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?*” (Matthew 6:27, NIV). While our worries feel very threatening, they do not actually have the power we imagine.

Physiologically, the height of a panic episode usually doesn't last long – typically minutes – because our bodies can only sustain that adrenaline surge briefly [5] . After adrenaline spikes, the **parasympathetic nervous system** (the body's calming “brakes”) will kick in to slow the heart rate and breathing back down. You might feel exhausted or shaken after an attack, as the body recovers from the adrenaline flood. Some people feel anxious or “on edge” for hours after, worrying when the next attack will come. This anticipatory anxiety can, unfortunately, trigger another attack, creating a vicious cycle. It's easy to start feeling *afraid of the next panic attack*, leading to avoidance of any activity or place where one occurred. This is how panic disorder often develops – people begin limiting their lives, afraid of fear itself [33] .

Understanding the biology of panic is actually empowering. It helps to realize that your pounding heart, fast breathing, dizziness, and other symptoms are part of a natural *protective* mechanism – not a sign that you're dying or going insane. As one Christian author observed, *our bodies are “fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:14), and the fear response is one of God's built-in tools for survival. The problem is when that tool misfires or overreacts. In those moments, we need to address not only the physical reaction, but also our thoughts and faith response to calm the storm.

Biblical Perspectives on Anxiety and Fear

How should Christians think about panic attacks? First, it's important to understand that **experiencing anxiety or panic is not a sin** in itself – it's a human experience that even faithful believers have faced throughout history. The Bible is honest about fear and worry as part of the human condition. “*Anxiety weighs*



down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up," says Proverbs 12:25, recognizing the heavy burden anxiety can be. The Psalmist candidly admitted, *"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy"* (Psalm 94:19, NIV). Notice that God's Word acknowledges the reality of anxiety while also pointing to God's comfort as the remedy.

In fact, **many heroes of faith grappled with intense fear or despair**. The prophet **Elijah** is one striking example. After a great spiritual victory, Elijah's life was threatened by an evil queen, and this courageous man fled into the wilderness in terror. In 1 Kings 19, we find Elijah so overwhelmed that he prays for God to take his life, then collapses in exhausted sleep. How does God respond? Not with anger or immediate correction, but with compassionate care: He sends an angel to feed Elijah and let him rest (1 Kings 19:5-8). Only after addressing Elijah's physical needs does the Lord speak to him in a gentle whisper to renew his perspective (1 Kings 19:9-13). This story shows that **God understands our frailty**. Elijah's panic and depression didn't mean he lacked faith entirely; it meant he was human and depleted. God lovingly provided **rest, nourishment, and a word of hope**. Similarly, if you are battling panic or anxiety, know that God does not abandon you or scold you for feeling afraid. He cares for you in body and spirit.

Jesus Himself spoke often to anxious hearts. *"Do not worry about tomorrow...each day has enough trouble of its own,"* He taught, pointing out how the Father faithfully feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, and how much more He will care for His children (Matthew 6:25-34 NIV). Jesus's command *"Do not worry"* (and the many times He says "Fear not") is not meant to shame us, but to **invite us into trust**. He calls us *"little flock"* (Luke 12:32), an assurance that we have a tender Shepherd watching over us. Far from dismissing our fears, Jesus offers **comfort and peace**: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (John 14:27 NIV). This promise of peace is profound, because Jesus knows the trials of living in a fallen world. On the night before the cross, Jesus Himself experienced agony and extreme stress in Gethsemane – *"my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,"* He said (Mark 14:34). He prayed with such anguish that His sweat was like drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Jesus understands panic-level distress. Yet He entrusted Himself to the Father's will, and an angel strengthened Him (Luke 22:42-43). Because of Jesus, we have a Savior who empathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15) – including anxiety – and who intercedes for us.

Importantly, the Bible teaches that **we can bring our anxiety to God**. *"Humble yourselves...casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you,"* says 1 Peter 5:7. God invites us to offload our worries onto His capable shoulders. The Apostle Paul – who faced countless perilous situations that could have induced panic – echoed Jesus's words with a prescription for peace: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV). This is not a trite answer; it's a profound spiritual strategy. Paul isn't saying "just flip a switch and stop feeling anxious." Rather, he acknowledges anxiety ("whenever it arises, in **every situation**") and directs us to **turn those anxious thoughts into prayers**. Tell God what you need, thank Him for what He's done, and *receive* His peace. Christians over the centuries have testified that when they surrender their fears to God in prayer, a supernatural peace often follows – one that "transcends understanding," as the verse says. It may not always come instantly or magically, but **inviting God into your panic** makes a real difference. You are reminding yourself that God is present, powerful, and loving in the midst of your distress.

Faith, however, does not mean we will never feel anxiety. It means when we do, we have a refuge. Trusting God is a process of daily reliance, and sometimes a battle to refocus our minds on His truth. After encouraging prayer, Paul immediately advises believers to change their thought patterns: *"Whatever is true,*



whatever is noble, whatever is right...think about such things" (Phil. 4:8). This aligns closely with what modern psychology tells us about managing panic: we must **counter the fearful thoughts** and interpretations fueling the attack. Taking "every thought captive" (2 Corinthians 10:5) to the truth of Christ is a biblical way of describing what therapy calls cognitive restructuring. In moments of panic, this might mean reminding yourself: *"I feel like something terrible is happening, but in reality I am experiencing a panic attack. It will pass. God is with me; I am not in danger right now."* Such truth-based self-talk, combined with reliance on God's presence, can start to break the fear cycle.

Finally, it's crucial to dispel the notion that if you were a "better Christian" you wouldn't experience panic or anxiety. **Having panic attacks does not mean you lack faith.** It means you are a person with a nervous system responding to stress. Some well-meaning Christians might say things like, "Just pray more" or imply that anxiety is purely a spiritual failure. While prayer is vital (as we've affirmed), comments that induce guilt are not helpful and are not truly biblical. The Bible does not promise a life free of all anxiety; rather, it offers us God's comfort and wisdom to navigate it. Far from condemning anxious people, **God draws near to the brokenhearted** (Psalm 34:18) and encourages us. He gave Elijah rest instead of rebuke; Jesus gently corrected worried Martha by inviting her to refocus on Him (Luke 10:41–42). **There is grace for our struggles.** So if you battle panic attacks, do not compound the problem by believing God is angry with you. He is a compassionate Father who wants to help you find healing and hope.

Integrating Faith with Modern Treatments

In addition to spiritual support, **modern medicine and therapy offer effective treatments** for panic attacks – and using them is not at odds with trusting God. We live in a fallen world where, just as our bodies can get sick or injured, our brains and nervous systems can face challenges. Seeking medical help for panic or anxiety is a wise and often necessary step, just as seeking help for diabetes or a broken bone would be. Every good and perfect gift is from above (James 1:17), and in His providence God has provided knowledge and tools – doctors, counselors, techniques, medications – that can alleviate suffering.

Is it okay for a Christian to take anti-anxiety medication or see a therapist? Absolutely. There is nothing in Scripture that forbids using legitimate medicine; on the contrary, the Apostle Luke was a physician, and Paul advised Timothy to take a remedy for his health (1 Timothy 5:23). Christian counselors emphasize that taking prescribed medication for an anxiety disorder is **not a sign of weak faith or sin**. The aim is to find relief and restore the ability to function, which are good and worthwhile goals. The Biblical Counseling Center notes that *"taking anti-anxiety medicines is not wrong because you are doing it to find relief and the ability to function at an improved level. This is a worthwhile goal and morally acceptable."* [31] In other words, using medicine as a tool to get healthy is a morally legitimate choice. You can thank God for the provision of treatment while still ultimately depending on Him for healing. One Christian writer who overcame severe panic disorder put it this way: *"Medication is a gift from God... If medication provides a means to healing, then why wouldn't we take that blessing?"* [32] . It's important, of course, to use medications wisely under a doctor's guidance – but there should be no shame in utilizing them.

The primary treatments for recurrent panic attacks (panic disorder) are **psychotherapy and medication**, often a combination of both [9] . **Psychotherapy** (talk therapy), especially **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, has a strong track record of helping people overcome panic disorder. In therapy, individuals learn to understand their panic triggers, challenge the catastrophic thoughts, and gradually desensitize themselves to the bodily sensations of panic. For example, a therapist might use *interoceptive exposure* techniques – having the person intentionally mimic some panic symptoms in a safe setting – to prove that those



sensations are not actually dangerous [9] . Over time, this retrains the brain to stop triggering fear in response to normal bodily changes. **CBT is highly effective**: studies have shown that on the order of 70–90% of people who complete CBT for panic disorder experience significant improvement or recovery [33] . This makes panic disorder one of the most treatable anxiety conditions. Importantly, the skills learned in therapy (such as breathing techniques, cognitive reframing, and gradual exposure) tend to have lasting benefits and low relapse rates [33] . Many Christians find that a good therapist – whether secular or Christian – can be a Godsend, providing practical tools that complement their faith. Indeed, engaging in wise counsel is biblical (Proverbs 11:14), and a trained counselor can help you “renew your mind” (Romans 12:2) in very concrete ways.

Medications can also play a valuable role, particularly for more severe cases or as a short-term aid. The most commonly prescribed medications for panic disorder are **antidepressants**, especially **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)** like fluoxetine (Prozac) or sertraline (Zoloft) [9] . These medications work by adjusting brain chemistry (increasing serotonin levels) to reduce anxiety over the long term. SSRIs are not habit-forming, and they are often effective in reducing the frequency and intensity of panic attacks after a few weeks of use [9] . Another class, **SNRIs** (like venlafaxine), can also be used. In some cases, doctors may prescribe **benzodiazepines** (such as alprazolam/Xanax or clonazepam) for short-term relief – these tranquilizers can quickly calm the nervous system. However, benzodiazepines carry a risk of dependence and are generally not a preferred long-term solution for panic disorder [9] . Medical experts caution that relying on benzodiazepines alone can inadvertently make recovery harder, because one might come to fear functioning without the pill [33] . Most guidelines recommend using them sparingly, while focusing on therapy and/or non-addictive medications for long-term management [33] .

From a Christian viewpoint, using medication should ideally be **part of a holistic approach**. Medicine can help clear the storm clouds enough for you to work on underlying issues. As one pastor and counselor put it, medication can “mute” the physical intensity of anxiety, but **medicine alone cannot solve the spiritual and emotional roots** [31] . It’s like treating pain while you also address what’s causing the pain. **Combine** medical treatment with **spiritual growth and support**. Continue to pray, meditate on Scripture, and lean into Christian community while you use these tools. Think of medication and therapy as instruments God can use in your healing process. Just as God can work through a surgeon’s hands in a life-saving operation, He can work through a psychiatrist’s prescription or a counselor’s techniques to bring relief and restoration to your mind. There is no conflict between praying for God’s peace and taking practical steps to pursue wellness – both are acts of stewardship over your health.

In fact, many of the effective therapeutic strategies for panic have echoes in biblical wisdom. For instance, **learning to slow your breathing** during a panic attack is a key technique that therapists teach [5] . This is because taking slow, deep breaths counteracts the fight-or-flight response and engages the body’s God-given calming system. When you deliberately breathe slower (around 5-6 breaths per minute, making your exhales longer than inhales), you stimulate the **vagus nerve**, which tells your brain to relax and helps steady your heart rate [5] . This is a physiological design that mirrors the biblical concept of “*Be still*” (Psalm 46:10). As you practice calm breathing, you might even recite a short prayer or verse with each breath (for example, inhale thinking “The Lord is my shepherd,” exhale: “I shall not fear”). In doing so, you combine physical and spiritual calming methods.

Additionally, therapy often encourages **mindfulness** and grounding techniques – essentially being present in the moment instead of spiraling in “what if” thoughts. Similarly, Scripture encourages us to set our minds on what is true in the present and to remember God’s presence *here and now*. “*Never will I leave you; never*



will I forsake you,” God says (Hebrews 13:5). Reminding yourself of this promise can ground you when panic swells. Some Christians find it helpful to keep a small notecard of a favorite verse in their pocket or on their phone’s lock screen – when they feel panic rising, they read and repeat, for example, *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in You”* (Psalm 56:3), or *“Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you”* (Psalm 55:22). This kind of **anchoring in God’s Word** can interrupt the panic cycle and refocus your mind on God’s care.

Lifestyle adjustments are another piece of the puzzle. Proper rest, nutrition, and exercise can make a big difference in anxiety levels. In Elijah’s story, physical rest and food were pivotal in his recovery (1 Kings 19:5–8). In our lives, we should heed the principle of Sabbath rest and self-care. Chronic stress and exhaustion can leave our nervous system raw and prone to panic, as was the case for one Christian leader who suffered a breakdown: she realized her lack of rest and constant overwork had pushed her body into a sustained fight-or-flight mode **【32】**. It’s not unspiritual to take care of your body; on the contrary, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and needs proper care. **Exercise** is a natural anxiety reducer – it relieves muscle tension and burns off stress hormones. Even a simple walk outside can have immediate calming effects. Being outdoors in God’s creation can also remind you of His larger presence and control, easing an anxious mind. Watching caffeine and sugar intake is another practical tip, since stimulants can trigger or worsen panic sensations in some people **【3】**. Getting adequate sleep is crucial as well, because fatigue can lower your threshold for stress. Think of these practical measures as wisdom – the kind of wisdom Proverbs encourages us to seek. They are ways of cooperating with God’s design for our minds and bodies.

Practical Coping Strategies for Panic Attacks

When a panic attack strikes, it can be overwhelmingly hard to think clearly. Having a plan of **coping strategies** in place can help you ride out the storm. Here are some practical steps, integrating both psychological techniques and spiritual practices, that you can use or adapt when you feel panic coming on:

- **Recognize It and Reframe It:** The first step is to recognize that *“This is a panic attack. I am not dying; this will pass.”* Remind yourself that what you are experiencing, though extremely uncomfortable, is not a heart attack or a loss of sanity – it is a temporary episode of high anxiety. This mental reframing is powerful. As one psychiatrist notes, *“Just knowing what it is helps people”* begin to feel safer **【5】**. If you’ve been medically evaluated before and told you have panic attacks, hold on to that knowledge. You might even keep a short truth written down: *“These symptoms are scary but not dangerous. I will be ok.”* By identifying the situation accurately, you prevent additional fear from amplifying the panic. This aligns with biblical truth-telling to oneself, as the psalmist did: *“Why, my soul, are you downcast?... Put your hope in God”* (Psalm 42:11). In other words, acknowledge how you feel but then guide yourself toward hope.
- **Breathe Slowly and Deeply:** One of the most effective immediate techniques is to **control your breathing**. Panic often makes us hyperventilate (rapid, shallow breathing) which can cause dizziness, tingling, and chest tightness that further scare us. Instead, *choose* to slow down your breaths. For example, inhale slowly for a count of 4, then exhale slowly for a count of 6 or 8. Let your belly expand on each breath in (diaphragmatic breathing). This slow exhale triggers the body’s calming response via the vagus nerve, telling your brain that it’s OK to relax **【5】**. It might help to close your eyes and focus on a mental image of a peaceful place or the presence of Christ with you. You could pray silently with each breath: *“Lord, fill me with Your peace as I breathe in, and I release my fear as I breathe out.”* Physically, you will likely notice your pounding heart begin to settle within a

The information presented is for educational and inspirational purposes only, it is not intended as medical advice.



couple of minutes of steady breathing. It can be useful to practice deep breathing **before** panic strikes (for instance, practicing 5 minutes each morning and night), so that the technique comes more naturally in anxious moments. This practice can reflect the biblical meditation idea – *“be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him”* (Psalm 37:7).

- **Ground Yourself in the Present:** Panic attacks often involve a sense of unreality or being out of control. Grounding techniques help bring you back to the present moment and reassure your mind that you are safe. One simple grounding tool is the “5-4-3-2-1” method: identify 5 things you can see around you, 4 things you can feel (the floor under your feet, the chair you’re on, etc.), 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. Describing these sensory details to yourself can interrupt racing thoughts. Another grounding approach is to carry a small object like a cross or a smooth stone in your pocket – when panic hits, physically grasp it and focus on how it feels in your hand, reminding you of God’s nearness. Quoting a short Scripture is also a way to ground your mind. For instance, whispering repeatedly, *“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid”* (paraphrase of Psalm 118:6), can create a mental anchor until the wave passes.
- **Use God’s Word as a Weapon Against Fear:** The Bible is full of **promises and affirmations** that can counter the lies panic tells you. Fear often whispers, “You’re alone, this will never end, you can’t handle this.” But God says, *“Never will I leave you”* (Hebrews 13:5), *“This too shall pass,”* and *“You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you”* (Philippians 4:13). Memorize a few key verses that speak to anxiety and God’s care, so you can recall them in the moment. Some favorites of many believers include: *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1), *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in You”* (Psalm 56:3), *“Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:7), and *“Be strong and courageous... for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:9). Speak these truths out loud if possible. There is power in the Word of God to cut through mental chaos (Hebrews 4:12). In a very real sense, you are engaging in spiritual warfare against fear, using the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). It’s not about magically making the attack stop, but about **fortifying your spirit** to endure with God’s help. Many Christians attest that calling on Jesus – even a simple *“Lord, help me!”* – brings a tangible sense of relief or at least the courage to persevere through the peak of panic.
- **Practice “Riding the Wave”:** Instead of fighting the panic sensations (which can often amplify them), try adopting a posture of *acceptance* and *observation*. Some therapists use the metaphor of riding a wave: a panic attack will rise, crest, and fall like a wave in the ocean. If you thrash against a wave, you exhaust yourself; but if you float and let it carry you, it will eventually dissipate. Practically, this means telling yourself, “Okay, body, do your worst – I’m going to wait this out.” It’s counter-intuitive, but giving your body permission to have the adrenaline rush can short-circuit the fear of the symptoms. As you feel each sensation, mentally note it: “My heart is pounding... my hands are shaking... I feel dizzy...” and then remind yourself, “I know why – it’s the adrenaline and it will pass.” You can even thank your body: “I know you’re trying to protect me, but there’s no real danger right now.” This kind of non-judgmental observation engages the **frontal cortex** (the rational part of the brain) to soothe the alarm coming from the emotional brain **[5]**. It echoes the biblical principle of taking thoughts captive – you are choosing not to run with the catastrophic thoughts, but to almost step outside them and observe. Often, by the time you’ve calmly catalogued a few symptoms, you’ll notice something has begun to ease. Remember: *“Panic always passes.”* The wave will recede. Keep reminding yourself of that truth. As Dr. Aaronson says, *“If you’re not afraid of it, then who cares if it happens? It passes.”* **[5]** This attitude can rob panic of much of its power.



- **Engage in Prayer and Worship:** It might be hard to pray *long* prayers in the middle of a panic attack, but even a short, earnest prayer is effective. “*God, please help me now*” is enough. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with wordless groans when we don’t know what to pray (Romans 8:26). Some people find it calming to play worship music or quietly sing a hymn/chorus they know by heart. Music has a way of steadying the heartbeat and focusing the mind on God’s presence. The act of praise, even when you do it through gritted teeth and tearful eyes, can shift the atmosphere of your mind from terror to trust. King David often did this in the Psalms, essentially preaching to his own soul to hope in God while in distress (Psalm 42). You might try softly singing “**It Is Well with My Soul**” or any song that comforts you. The lyrics “*Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed*” from the classic hymn “**How Firm a Foundation**” are directly drawn from Scripture (Isaiah 41:10) and can reinforce your faith that God is with you in that very moment.
- **After the Storm Passes:** Once the acute panic subsides, you may feel drained, or you may feel a residual anxious “*what if it happens again?*” This is a good time to deliberately engage in something calming and nourishing. Perhaps drink a glass of water, eat a healthy snack, or take a slow walk. You might journal about what you experienced, noting what seemed to help. And make sure to thank God for bringing you through it – “*I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears*” (Psalm 34:4). Gratitude, even for small victories like surviving that panic episode, can reinforce a sense of safety and hope. If the panic attack was especially intense or you feel shaken, reach out to someone – a spouse, friend, or prayer partner – and let them know you had a hard time. Talking it through with a compassionate listener can alleviate the lingering emotional tension. Community support is very important; **you do not have to battle anxiety alone**. As Galatians 6:2 says, “*Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*”

Finding rest and peace is an important part of recovering from anxiety. Even Jesus told His disciples to “come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31). Incorporating regular times of relaxation, whether enjoying nature or another calm activity, helps replenish your mind and body.

Case Study: From Panic to Peace – A Testimony of Hope

To see how these principles can play out in real life, consider the testimony of **Kyle Zunker**, a man who shared his journey in *Christianity Today* in 2024. In his late teens and early twenties, Kyle suffered from **debilitating panic attacks** that began during college. At their worst, the panic attacks struck frequently and unpredictably – his heart would race uncontrollably, his face would burn, his body would go numb or tingle, and he’d be drenched in sweat and terror. The anxiety became constant; he developed insomnia, muscle twitches, and even stress-related shingles [14]. He was so desperate for relief that he went from doctor to doctor, underwent numerous tests (such as MRI scans for fear of serious illness), and was put on medication just to cope day by day [14]. During this period, Kyle’s faith was nearly nonexistent – he had drifted into atheism and was trying to handle his problems entirely on his own. Achieving life goals (graduating law school, landing a job, getting engaged) did nothing to calm his inner turmoil [16]. He recalls that even when his dreams came true, “*my anxiety had not improved, and a new fear crept in: if those [dreams] hadn’t brought peace, then what could?*” [16]. This is a poignant realization that many can relate to – we often think, “*If only X happens, I’ll feel better,*” but when anxiety is internally rooted, external successes don’t fix it.

Kyle’s turning point began when, somewhat unexpectedly, he started attending a local church with his fiancée [16]. Initially skeptical, he found himself intrigued by the message of the gospel and the warm

The information presented is for educational and inspirational purposes only, it is not intended as medical advice.



welcome of the Christian community. Over a few months, he went from hardened unbelief to being cautiously open to God. Yet, his panic attacks still raged. The climax came one night when he reached the absolute end of his strength. After another sleepless night of pacing the apartment to calm his racing heart, Kyle **finally dropped to his knees in surrender**. He prayed the only words that came to him from the Lord's Prayer: *"Thy will be done."* Over and over he whispered this to God, effectively saying, *"God, I can't control this anymore. I yield my life to You, whatever that means."* 【16】. In that moment of humility and desperation, Kyle experienced what he later identified as the **presence of God bringing unexplainable peace**. He didn't get an instant miraculous cure – he still had to walk out a journey of recovery – but from that night onward, there was a shift. He had invited God into his battle, and God's peace began to "guard his heart and mind" as Philippians 4:7 describes 【16】.

In the following weeks and months, Kyle diligently combined **spiritual growth with practical steps**. He continued in church, devouring Scripture and Christian books to renew his once-skeptical mind. He also maintained healthy habits (exercise, rest) and likely continued treatment as needed. Gradually, he found that the panic attacks lost their grip on him. In his own words, *"The peace of God changed my life. It gave me power over anxiety and fear, and my body began to heal as joy and hope replaced depression and despair."* 【16】 Three years later, when a major family crisis hit (his father's cancer diagnosis), Kyle was amazed at how different his reaction was. The old panic and paralysis were gone; in their place was courage and the ability to be strong for his dad 【16】. He attributes this resilience to being "armored with God's peace" as a result of his faith.

Kyle's story illustrates a few key lessons:

- **Surrendering to God was the game-changer:** All the medical efforts and lifestyle changes provided partial relief, but the core healing began when he addressed the spiritual void and yielded control to Christ. This doesn't negate the value of the other components (indeed, God often works through both prayer and medicine together), but it shows that **ultimate peace is a gift from God**. When Kyle prayed and essentially cast all his anxieties on the Lord, he experienced that promised peace which transcends understanding (Phil. 4:7). For him, it was a profound almost tangible peace that marked the beginning of the end for the panic disorder.
- **Healing was a journey, not an overnight miracle:** Even after his night of surrender, Kyle had to continue walking step by step – immersing himself in Scripture, connecting with other believers, and no doubt continuing to practice anxiety management strategies. Similarly, most people recovering from panic disorder will improve gradually. You might wish for an instant deliverance (and God **can** do that), but often He works through process. Each small victory – maybe driving a little farther than you could before, or experiencing one less attack this month – is part of God's healing unfolding in your life.
- **Joy and hope can replace despair:** This is perhaps the most encouraging takeaway. At one point, Kyle felt utterly hopeless, believing he was "incapable of fulfillment" and would never be free of anxiety 【16】. Many who suffer panic attacks feel that way – that their life will always be overshadowed by fear. But that turned out to be a lie. With God's intervention and appropriate treatment, Kyle's **outcome was a life restored**. The Bible says, *"Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning"* (Psalm 30:5). No matter how long your "night" of anxiety has been, a new morning can dawn. In Kyle's case, morning came and it was full of joy and purpose. He even



went on to write a book about conquering fear through faith, aiming to help others find the same freedom.

Your story may not be identical to Kyle's, but the elements of his victory are available to you as well. **Trusting in God, learning effective coping skills, and getting help** can lead to a dramatic turnaround. As the Apostle Paul testified, *"He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us again. On Him we have set our hope"* (2 Corinthians 1:10). God is in the business of deliverance, and that includes deliverance from the bondage of fear.

Conclusion: Moving Forward in Faith and Resilience

Living with panic attacks is undoubtedly a great challenge, but it is one that can be overcome. As we have explored, a comprehensive approach – addressing body, mind, and spirit – offers the best path to healing. **Physically**, we respect the mechanisms of our God-designed nervous system and use wise interventions (breathing, relaxation, sometimes medication or therapy) to help it reset. **Mentally**, we confront the anxious thoughts and learn to replace lies with truth, much as Jesus said, *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:32). **Spiritually**, we draw near to the God who calls Himself our Refuge, casting our cares on Him and trusting in His love each step of the way.

Remember that progress might be gradual. Be patient with yourself as you heal. Even biblical characters had periods of recovery – Elijah's journey to Horeb took 40 days after his breakdown (1 Kings 19:8), during which time God nourished him and gave him renewed purpose. Don't be discouraged if you still experience some panic symptoms as you work through this; it does not mean you lack faith or that nothing's changing. Often the change is happening under the surface, and you will notice it in hindsight – perhaps an attack that would have lasted 30 minutes now lasts only 10, or what would have caused a panic last year only makes you moderately anxious today. **Celebrate incremental victories** and give thanks to God for each one. Over time, these small gains add up to significant improvement.

It's also crucial to **stay connected with supportive people**. Find a trusted friend, family member, pastor, or counselor with whom you can share openly. The act of talking about your struggles can reduce their power (there's even research indicating that putting feelings into words lessens the amygdala's reaction [20]). Don't isolate yourself. Let others "speak a kind word to cheer you up" (cf. Prov. 12:25). Sometimes just knowing someone else understands and is praying for you can reduce the frequency of panic attacks. If you haven't already, consider joining a support group or a Bible study where others have walked through anxiety; hearing their experiences can be both instructive and reassuring.

Above all, **anchor your hope in Christ**. He is the solid rock that no wave of panic can wash away. Isaiah 26:3 promises, *"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You."* It may take practice to train your mind to return to trust when panic comes, but God honors even our mustard-seed faith. Each time you choose to recite a verse instead of giving in to catastrophic thoughts, each time you step back into a situation you avoided (because you refuse to let fear rule you), each time you take a breath and say, "Jesus, I trust You," you are strengthening that steadfast mind. You are, in effect, **resisting the enemy of fear** and he *will* flee in time (James 4:7).

As a final encouragement, consider the transformation in the lives of those who have come through this trial. The same David who wrote of his fears also sang, *"I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me*



from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4). The apostle Peter, who once panicked and sank in the waves, later became a pillar of bold faith – he learned to cast his anxieties on the Lord. These testimonies, ancient and modern, all point to a God who is faithful to heal. **Your panic attacks are not the end of your story**; with God's help, they can become a chapter where He leads you into greater freedom and dependence on Him.

In summary, **panic attacks can be overcome** through a blend of **faith, wisdom, and support**. Use the resources available – Scripture, prayer, therapy techniques, medical treatment if needed – without shame or hesitation. In doing so, you are like a person building their house on the rock (Matthew 7:24-25); the storms may beat against it, but it will not collapse because its foundation is secure. Fear is a formidable foe, but it is not greater than our God. As you take each forward step, no matter how small, **the Lord Jesus walks with you**. He speaks to your storm-tossed heart the same words He spoke to the disciples on the raging sea: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." (Matthew 14:27 NIV). With time and trust, you will see the waves of panic subside and the dawn of peace rise in your life.

"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy." – Psalm 94:19 NIV

References

1. Ceri Perkins, "The science behind panic attacks — and what you can do to manage them." *TED Ideas* (Aug 4, 2021). [At least one-third of people will experience a panic attack in their lifetime, and panic attacks, while terrifying, are not medically dangerous.](#)
2. *Harvard Health Publishing*, "Understanding the stress response" (April 3, 2024). [Explanation of the fight-or-flight response involving the amygdala, hypothalamus, adrenaline release, and physiological changes during stress.](#)
3. *Mayo Clinic*, "Panic attacks and panic disorder – Diagnosis and treatment." [Main treatment options are psychotherapy \(especially CBT\) and medications \(SSRIs, etc.\), which help reduce the frequency and intensity of panic attacks.](#)
4. Peter Ham, M.D. et al., "Treatment of Panic Disorder." *American Family Physician* 71(4):733-739 (2005). [Evidence-based review stating that SSRIs or TCAs plus cognitive-behavioral therapy are effective; 60% + of patients became panic-free after treatment in studies.](#)
5. "Overcoming Panic Disorder." *Brigham and Women's Hospital Health Blog* (2021). [Psychotherapist explains panic disorder mechanisms \(anxiety sensitivity, interoceptive conditioning\) and notes CBT is 70-90% effective for treating panic disorder.](#)
6. Tim Allchin, "Should Christians Use Anti-Anxiety Medication?" *Biblical Counseling Center* (Oct 15, 2019). [Christian counseling perspective affirming that taking anxiety medication for relief and improved functioning is morally acceptable and can be helpful as part of a broader strategy.](#)
7. Christy Boulware, "Is Taking Medication Not Trusting God?" (Blog post, Apr 12, 2022). [Personal testimony of a Christian who recovered from severe panic disorder, describing medication as a gift from God and emphasizing that taking medication for mental health is not a lack of faith.](#)
8. Kyle Zunker, "My Dreams Had Come True. But the Panic Attacks Remained." *Christianity Today* Vol. 68, No.5 (Jul/Aug 2024). [First-person testimony of overcoming debilitating panic attacks through renewed faith in Christ, prayer, and God's peace, after years of medical struggle.](#)
9. **Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV)**. Biblical quotations are taken from NIV (2011 edition). Key verses referenced include Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7, Matthew 6:25-34, John 14:27, Psalm 94:19, Proverbs 12:25, Psalm 34:4, among others, illustrating biblical counsel on anxiety and God's comfort. (Available at [BibleGateway NIV online](#))