



## Anxiety & Panic Attacks

### What is an anxiety attack / panic attack?

A panic attack is a sudden rush of physical symptoms – like shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, and sweating – that occurs at the same time as uncontrollable anxiety.

### Recognizing the symptoms:

Recognizing what is happening can help you feel more in control. Once you realize that you are experiencing a panic attack, you can focus on techniques for calming yourself.

Some **common symptoms** are: irregular heartbeat, dizziness, shortness of breath, feeling light headed, nausea, shaking, sweating, fatigue, chest pain, heartburn, muscle spasms, hot flashes, and/or sudden chills.

### What to do if you are having a panic attack or anxiety attack:

1. **Sit or lay down:** If you are standing up, it will help you relax to sit or lay down.
2. **Deep Breathing:** Focus on taking deep breaths in and out through your mouth. Feel the air slowly fill your chest and belly and slowly leave again. Breathe in for a count of 4, hold for 1 second, then breathe out for a count of 4.
3. **Close your eyes:** This will help you block out stimuli and make it easier to focus on your breathing.
4. **Mindfulness:** Focus on physical sensations, like digging your feet into the ground, or feeling the texture of your jeans on your hands. These specific sensations ground you firmly in reality and give you something objective to focus on.
5. **Find a Focus Object:** Pick one object and note everything about it. For example, you may notice how the hand on the clock jerks when it ticks, and that it is slightly lopsided. Describe the patterns, color, shapes, and size of the object to yourself. Focus all of your energy on this object.
6. **Muscle Relaxation:** Consciously relax one muscle at a time, starting with the fingers in your hand, and move your way up through your body.
7. **Think about Your Happy Place:** Think about the most relaxing place in the world. It could be the beach or a cabin in the mountains. Picture yourself there, and focus on the details. How does it sound, how does it smell, who is there with you?

### Share your experience with someone:

- Tell your host family, local coordinator, and / or school counselor if you have a panic attack. They are there to help and support you!
- If you have any history of medication, therapy, and/or mental health support, share your history with YFU. YFU USA cannot help you unless we have all of the information.