

P.A.N.I.C. 9-1-1: A Method for Calming Yourself in the Midst of a Panic Attack

A Beginning Plan

Let's begin by equipping you with a method for settling your extremely anxious or severely depressed mind if that is something you are currently struggling with. This will also equip you if negative thoughts decide to pop up in the future.

When you find yourself in an emergency situation, what do you do? You call for help, right? Most people dial 9-1-1. In essence, we P.A.N.I.C. 9-1-1. We have first responders who arrive and help us through our situation.



I want to give you a P.A.N.I.C. 9-1-1 solution for mild mental health emergencies such as a panic attack, extremely disturbing thoughts, or a rampant thought process.

Certainly, in the event of a true (and especially) life-threatening emergency, please do call for help and get appropriate medical treatment.

If you find yourself in a crowded situation where you cannot easily leave, or you're somewhere by yourself and a panic attack strikes, I want to equip you with a method to help you bring yourself out of it. Don't give yourself the mindset that you need someone else to get through it. You're strong! You've got this!

So, here's your P.A.N.I.C. 9-1-1 for acute emergencies like panic attacks or overwhelming negative thoughts:

P.A.N.I.C.: Please Act Nice- I'm in Crisis. Give yourself some grace. Be nice to yourself—don't be hard on yourself! This is difficult and you may feel like you're fighting for your life when a panic attack strikes.

- 9: Take nine slow, deep breaths in and out. If you need to control your focus more, have the entire inhalation and exhalation of each breath last nine seconds.
- 1: Find one thing in the room that you can focus on. It can be a couch, a lamp, a picture, a hairstyle, an outfit, an animal, a person, etc.
- 1: Think of something positive about that object. For example: "I see a lamp in the corner. I like the lamp because it provides light and brings me out of the darkness." (See what I did there? *wink*)

The point of this method is to take control of, refocus, and redirect our negative thoughts.

One of the first ways that we can take control of our racing thoughts is to override them by focusing on something specific. Immediately redirecting our thought process with something easy, such as counting, is a good way to divert our thoughts and be specific in what we are thinking about. Counting doesn't take much thought of your own and it doesn't overwhelm or paralyze your thought process. This is a learned behavior that has been built in from childhood, so it should come naturally. It will require just enough of your focus to be easily distracted because you're counting to a non-traditional number like nine.

If you come to find that just taking nine breaths is not enough of a distraction for you, continue on with the number nine by making the entire inhalation and exhalation process for each breath last nine seconds.

We want to refocus our thoughts away from menacing and tormenting mental images or phrases and focus on something we can see right there in the room with us. In the midst of chaotic thoughts, I can still look at a couch and tell what color it is or what material it is made of. I can see the dancing of the flame on a candle and smell the aroma it spreads throughout the room.

Diverting my attention and focusing on something else can move my train of thought from a track of panic and mental anguish to a track of focus and concentration on a real object.

Next, let's think about something positive related to that object. Do I like the color or the material? Do I like the design or the architecture? Do I like the shape of it, or even the smell? Tap into your other senses to explore what makes that object unique and what you like most about it.

We are redirecting our thoughts to focus on something we can see and touch, and we are changing our mindset by forcing ourselves to think of something positive. In the midst of chaotic thoughts, we often drown in negativity. If I am focusing on the fact that my heart is racing, my hands are shaking, or that my palms are sweaty, I am fueling the negativity and in turn increasing my physical symptoms.

When I am intentional and push those thoughts aside to analyze and focus on the positive aspects of something that I can use all of my senses for, it redirects my thoughts and gives me an object to discover and analyze.

“Okay, so I've done that and I'm still in a panic attack. I'm still severely depressed. Now what?” Do it again! Find another object. Find another thing to be grateful for

or to think positively about. Continue to work on redirecting your focus and your erratic thoughts.

The situation may not diffuse with redirecting your thoughts once. It wasn't one thought that got you to the mindset you are in now, so it's most likely not going to be one thought that pulls you out of the negative mindset once and for all. It's going to take practice and repetition. We are retraining our minds. We cannot master this after one usage.

So, when you find yourself in a reckless thought process of negative thoughts, or a whirlwind of chaotic thoughts in a panic attack, get help by using P.A.N.I.C 9-1-1.

We've got to be intentional.
We've got to choose what we want to allow into our minds.
We've got to choose to be positive!

“When you're in need of calming down, this can turn it all around.”

P.A.N.I.C. 9-1-1

9 - 1 - 1

9 slow, deep breaths in and out that each last 9 seconds

1 thing in the room I can use my senses to analyze

1 positive thing I like about that object