

Exercise

Professional Version | US English

Am I Experiencing Panic Disorder?



Description

Panic attacks are discrete episodes of intense fear or apprehension, accompanied by the rapid and concurrent onset of several physiological and psychological symptoms. Panic disorder is characterized by recurrent and unexpected panic attacks. Panic disorder is experienced by between 3 and 4 people out of every 100 at some point in their life (Kessler, Chiu, Jin, et al, 2006) but like many anxiety disorders, it is commonly under-diagnosed and often goes unrecognized (Kasper, 2006).

The DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for panic disorder include:

- Recurrent unexpected panic attacks where at least one of the attacks has been followed by one or both of the following for one month or more:
 - Persistent concern or worry about additional panic attacks or their consequences (e.g. losing control, having a heart attack, “going crazy”)
 - A significant maladaptive change in behavior related to the attacks (e.g. behaviors designed to avoid having panic attacks, such as avoidance of exercise or unfamiliar situations)

The ICD-11 diagnostic criteria for panic disorder include:

- Recurrent panic attacks that are unassociated with a specific situation or object and often occur spontaneously (i.e. the episodes are unpredictable).
- The presence of at least some panic attacks which are unexpected and seem to arise ‘out of the blue’.
- Panic attacks which are followed by consistent concern or worry about their recurrence or their perceived negative significance, or by behaviors intended to avoid their recurrence.

Am I Experiencing Panic Disorder? is an indicative screening tool, designed to help clients self-assess whether their experiences might warrant further investigation. It is not intended to give a formal diagnosis or provide a measure of severity.

Instructions

Suggested Question



Some people who describe symptoms like yours suffer from panic disorder. Would you like to try a short quiz that could give us an idea whether this is a problem that troubles you?

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.).

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Stansfeld, S., Clark, C., Bebbington, P., King, M., Jenkins, R., & Hinchliffe, S. (2016). Chapter 2: Common mental disorders. In S. McManus, P. Bebbington, R. Jenkins, & T. Brugha (Eds.), *Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014*. Leeds: NHS Digital.

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A diagnosis of panic disorder should only be made by a mental health professional. However, answering the questions below can give you an idea of whether a professional assessment might be helpful.

If you have had a panic attack before, have you:

Felt anxious, worried, or nervous about having more panic attacks?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Had thoughts of bad things happening because of panic attacks? (e.g. losing control, dying, going crazy)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Avoided situations where you worried that panic attacks might occur?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Left situations early because of panic attacks?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Spent a lot of time preparing for, or procrastinating about, situations where panic attacks might occur?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Distracted yourself to avoid thinking about panic attacks?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Needed help to cope with panic attacks? (e.g. medication, alcohol, other people)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

If you answered 'Yes' to a lot of these questions, you may be experiencing panic disorder. You might find it helpful to speak to your general practitioner, or a mental health professional about how you are feeling.

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Resource details

Title: Am I Experiencing Panic Disorder?

Type: Exercise

Language: English (US)

Translated title: Am I Experiencing Panic Disorder?

URL: <https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/am-i-experiencing-panic-disorder>

Resource format: Professional

Version: 20230721

Last updated by: JP

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