

COPING CARD

Panic attacks can be very frightening, especially when they are intense and “come out of the blue.” Millions of people like you have experienced panic attacks, but the good news is that they can be effectively managed or treated through various anxiety reduction techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, refocusing, system desensitization, and replacing distorted, negative self-talk with positive, reality-based self-talk. Hopefully you have already received training in the use of some of these strategies or techniques.

In this assignment you are asked to use a “coping card” to manage your panic attacks. Write down various coping strategies on your coping card to remind you of different strategies that you can use when your symptoms of panic begin to appear. Keep the coping card in a readily accessible place (e.g., in your purse or wallet, posted on the refrigerator or a bulletin board) so that you can review the list when you begin to feel highly anxious or stressed. You are encouraged to record at least five different coping strategies that you can use at different times. We encourage you to write down several strategies because no one single coping strategy, by itself, will be successful all the time or in every situation. The more strategies you have listed on your coping card, the greater the chance you will be able to use a strategy that works for a certain stressful event or situation. Remember, different strategies work for different people at different times.

Below is a list of different strategies you can use to record on your coping card. Talk with your therapist about what strategies best fit your situation or personality style.

1. Go with the anxiety, don't fight it

Tell yourself to go with the anxiety and don't fight it. You can tell that you are fighting the panic attack when you tense your muscles, become more frantic in your movements, and express such statements as “Why is this happening to me?” Remember, fighting the anxiety often only increases the intensity of the panic attack.

2. Utilize reality-based, positive self-talk to help replace distorted, negative self-talk

When the symptoms of panic begin to come on, it is helpful to use positive self-talk. Below are some examples of positive self-talk that you can use or tell yourself when the panic attacks emerge:

- “Pace your breathing and slow your body down.”
- “You can manage this panic attack.”
- “This panic attack won't last forever” or “It will go away.”
- “You've survived other panic attacks before.”
- “Just stop what you're doing and take a few minutes to relax.”

We encourage you to talk with your therapist about what specific self-statements you can use to manage your panic attacks.

3. Refocusing

Oftentimes, it helps to refocus your attention on calming activities to help reduce your anxiety. You are encouraged to relax while you are performing these calming activities. Examples of calming or relaxing activities include:

- Going for a walk
- Playing a guitar, piano, or another instrument
- Gardening
- Knitting or crocheting
- Playing a video game
- Singing your favorite song
- Dancing

4. Deep breathing and progressive relaxation

You are strongly encouraged to use deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation to help slow your body down and reduce your stress. Ask your therapist to train you in the use of these techniques if you are not familiar with them.

5. Record strategies on a “coping card”

After reviewing the list of various strategies and talking with your therapist, please record at least five different strategies on your coping card (you may record them on a 4 × 6 index card or the form below).

COPING CARD	
The following is a list of strategies I can use to manage my panic attacks:	
1.	_____

1.	_____

3.	_____

4.	_____

5.	_____

6.	_____

7.	_____
