

PANIC ATTACK PROTOCOL

A 4-Step Grounding Guide

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KEEP THIS ON YOUR PHONE OR PRINTED OUT

When a 10/10 panic attack hits, your brain cannot think rationally. Follow these steps mechanically.

STEP 1

RESET THE BODY

First 2 minutes — When you are in a full panic attack, your thinking brain is temporarily offline. You must change your physiology before you can change your thoughts.

- ▶ **The TIPP Skill (The Shock Button)** — Go to the bathroom and splash freezing cold water on your face, or hold an ice cube in your hand. This triggers the mammalian dive reflex, which physically forces your heart rate to slow down.
- ▶ **Tactical Breathing (The 4-4-4-4 Method)** — The exact breathing technique used by first responders and military personnel to regain control under extreme stress.
 1. Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds.
 2. Hold your breath for 4 seconds.
 3. Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.
 4. Hold empty for 4 seconds.**Repeat 4 times.**

STEP 2

DROP THE ANCHOR (Grounding)

Panic makes you feel like you are floating away or trapped in your mind. Anchor yourself into the physical room you are currently standing in.

- ▶ **The 5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Scan** — Look around you right now and physically name:
 - 5 things you can see (e.g., a chair, a pen, a clock).
 - 4 things you can physically feel (e.g., your feet on the floor, your shirt on your back).
 - 3 things you can hear (e.g., traffic, AC hum, a bird).
 - 2 things you can smell or taste.
 - 1 positive thing about yourself (e.g., “I am taking steps to handle this right now”).

STEP 3

RATIONAL TALK-DOWN (Cognitive Shift)

Your OCD will tell you that the panic means you are failing, weak, or dying. Read this script out loud to talk back to the panic, just like you did in session:

"This is just adrenaline. It is a biological false alarm.

My body is trying to protect me, but there is no actual danger here. I am safe right now in this room. My OCD is hyperfixating on my fears because I care about doing a good job.

I don't need to figure out my whole career right this second. I just need to let this wave of anxiety pass. It will peak, and it will go down."

STEP 4

RIDE THE WAVE (OCD Acceptance)

The more you fight a panic attack, the longer it lasts. Don't fight it — let it happen.

► **Stop Repeating the Loop** — If you find yourself repeating "I am just scared," gently interrupt it. Say, "Yes, I am scared, and that is okay. Fear is just an emotion, not a fact."

► **Lean Into It** — Instead of saying "I need this to stop," say to your anxiety, "Do your worst. Show me what you've got." When you stop fighting the panic, you strip away its power.

Remember: *A panic attack usually dissipates within 10 to 15 minutes. You are safe. This will pass.*