



## Quick Tips for Providers: *Educating Families about Panic Attacks*

Many children and adolescents experience panic attacks. This experience can be quite frightening for the child and parent alike. It is important to listen to the child and family's concerns and help them understand what a panic attack is.

### Explaining Panic Attacks to Parents and Caregivers

A panic attack may include one or more of the following symptoms:

- Sweating
- Dizziness /Nausea
- Choking Sensation
- Shakiness
- Racing Heart
- Difficulty Breathing

These physical symptoms are also accompanied by intense fear. Panic attacks are common and a normal bodily response to danger but can be a problem when they occur when no danger is present.

Parents/caregivers may worry about their child having future panic attacks. Assure the parent that these episodes can be managed and treatment options are available; such as cognitive behavioral therapy and medication.

### Talking to Kids about Panic Attacks

- “Sometimes our bodies think that we are in danger. When this happens, our body prepares to defend itself. This may cause our heart rate to go up and you may feel scared. We call this a panic attack”
- “Your parent/caregiver told me you had a panic attack. What kind of feelings did you have in your body when this happened? What did you think about when this happened? What emotions did you have?”
- “If you feel like you might have a panic attack again, there are ways to help your body and mind relax so that you can feel better. We can practice some of these skills together with your parent/caregiver.”

### Tips for Re-Occurring Panic Attacks

Encourage the child and family to create a list of coping skills that will help the child remain calm should another panic attack occur. Practice is key, encourage the child to try these coping skills by joining in on these activities.

- Deep Breathing
- Take a Break
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Listen to Music
- Squeeze a Stress Ball

*For more information, please visit [childmind.org](http://childmind.org) and [adaa.org](http://adaa.org).*

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