

Panic Attacks

All ages

15 mins

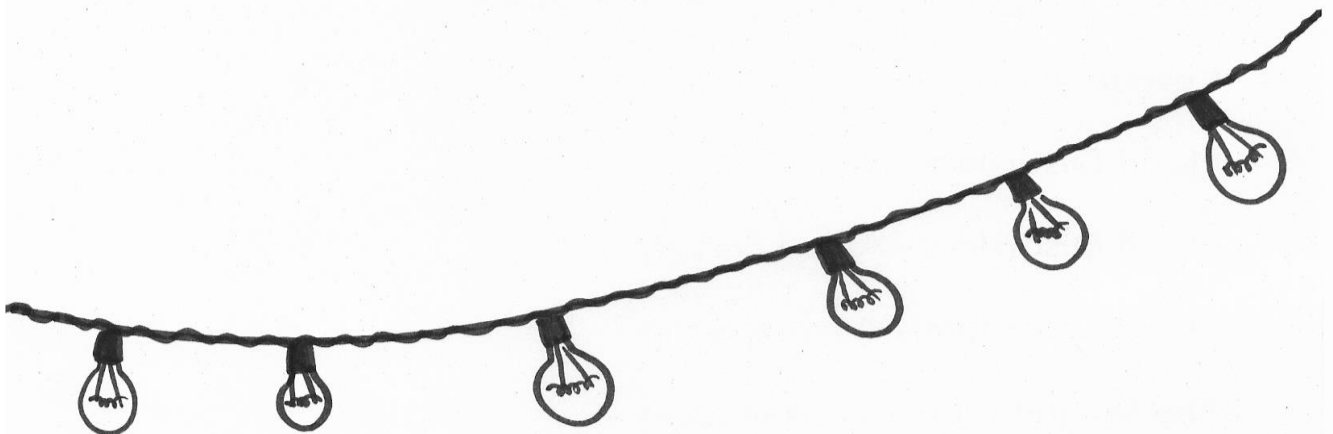
An activity that explores what a panic attack is like.

What you need:

- Copies of the CAMHS comic
- Stress tips resource sheet

Method:

- Explain that when anxiety is extreme it can lead to people experiencing a panic attack, which not only affects thoughts and emotions but also has a huge impact on the way we respond physically. Estimates suggest 1 in 10 people experience occasional panic attacks so they are not uncommon.
- Distribute copies of the comic which was created by young people who have experienced panic attacks.
- Explain that people with phobias can experience similar physiological reactions.
- Ask for examples of the sorts of phobias people may have.
- Explain that a certain level of adrenaline, stress hormone, is good when we are facing threatening or stressful situations. It can boost our performance and our response.
- Ask for suggestions of situations we might face in life that raise our adrenaline level. Examples might include exams, public speaking, being attacked. These are all real stressful situations and the right level of stress in these situations can enhance our performance or response.
- What is the difference in a panic attack? Ask for suggestions. Comment on the fact that the physiological response is so extreme that it is paralysing.
- Ask for suggestions of what we can do to help ourselves and others during a panic attack? Breathing and relaxation techniques have been found to be helpful.
- For a demonstration of a breathing technique watch this 4 minute film by Mara Wilson (actress from Matilda) who describes her own experience and shows the breathing technique she found most helpful.
<http://projecturok.org/mara-wilson/>
- This gif on you tube is also really helpful. It shows a visual image while a commentary guides you through a relaxation/breathing technique. (3 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4iGlwhy710>



Extension activity

50 mins

- Develop a comic or poster with tips on how to deal with a panic attack.
- Alternatively develop a comic or poster on the theme of coping with exam stress
- Students may find it helpful to look at some online resources:
 - www.anxietyuk.org.uk - useful information for young people and families.
 - www.youngminds.org.uk - comprehensive, accessible information about anxiety
 - www.thesite.org.uk - information and tips about dealing with anxiety
 - www.headspace.com - mindfulness and meditation resources available for use on your computer or as an app
 - 2 x Stress tips resources handouts
- In addition www.fixers.org.uk have very recently posted a video on you tube about a young women's experience of panic attacks and her plans to develop an advert to show others how to recognise and help people having a panic attack..
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=PNunxNEFnik>

