

How to beat...

PANIC ATTACKS

PANIC **What are they?**

A panic attack is an intense fear or discomfort which happens suddenly, without warning and without the presence of any danger. Symptoms include breathing problems, dizziness, faintness, shaking, sweating, numbness or tingling and flushes or chills.

symptoms of anxiety. Sufferers worry they might be going mad. But the symptoms of a panic attack are simply the result of the release of the stress hormone adrenaline.

PANIC **Why do they happen?**

You could perhaps have been under stress, from work or a bereavement, for example. Or you may experience panic attacks following surgery, a serious accident or childbirth. Panic attacks may also be part of an

Anyone who's had panic attacks will tell you what a terrifying experience they are. But there are many new ways to tackle them, without resorting to drugs...

underlying anxiety disorder, such as phobias or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). There could be biochemical factors, such as low blood sugar, which can lead to the release of more adrenaline. Stimulants like coffee, nicotine or recreational drugs might also be

triggers. Alternatively, you may have certain psychological traits—such as shyness or perfectionism—which make you more prone to anxiety. There is even a possibility that it is learnt behaviour, for example from a parent who reacted to stress with anxiety.

PANIC **Who do they affect?**

Anyone. They can even happen to people who have, until then, had no

CASE STUDY

I was cracking up ...now I've got my life back



Lorraine Ebbutt, 40, works as a laboratory technician. She lives in Barnstaple with her husband Steve, 42, a project manager, and their son Miles, three

My first panic attack was terrifying. I was in a meeting at work when, out of nowhere, I became really hot, light-headed, and felt as if I was trapped in a tunnel, zooming to the end. 'Your face!' said my horrified colleague. 'You've gone grey.' When I reached

up I felt my hair was soaking wet with sweat.

A few days later it happened again. I had trouble sleeping and had flashbacks to a traumatic event in my mid-20s which coincided with me going through a divorce. I didn't understand why it was happening now. Steve was supportive, but even talking about it made me anxious.

My GP referred me to two different counsellors. But after 18 months little had changed. I was getting attacks every few days so the fear of it happening again was on my mind constantly. Miles was only one at the time, but because I was on edge the whole time I found myself withdrawing from family life—from everything really. I thought I was cracking up.

When I first came across

Emotional Freedom Therapy on the internet, I was pretty sceptical. It's based on acupuncture meridian points but uses tapping with the fingertips rather than needles. I couldn't see how it could possibly work, but I was getting desperate.

I rang a practitioner, Ann Ross, who helped me do some tapping on myself there and then. I was stunned to realise that within seconds I was feeling better than I had in months.

Driving a two-hour round-trip and paying £50 a session wasn't easy, but my first visit left me feeling so wonderful, I knew I had to continue. I saw Ann once a fortnight for six months. I'd been holding on to fear and anger for 15 years, but thankfully I haven't

had a panic attack since.

I now know the tapping techniques and, occasionally, if I feel myself getting anxious, I use them on myself. Within seconds the feelings disappear. I'm like the old me, but so much more energised. I've got my life back.

Ann Ross says:

Stress and trauma disrupt a body's energy system, causing blocks. Through talking we find the triggers for those blocks and literally tap them away. It's like psychological acupuncture. At first, people feel embarrassed, but then they are so overwhelmed by the effects they don't care. This process may take

several sessions, or it might be instantaneous. With blocks in your energy you're like a torch whose batteries are low. You're not functioning at your true potential. When those blocks are removed it can transform your

