



Don't Panic! You Are in Control!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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You are sure that you are having a heart attack! You are sweating, trembling and shaking. Your heart is pounding at an accelerated rate and you have severe chest pain accompanied by numbing or tingling sensations in your arms.

While you wait for the ambulance you notice that you have shortness of breath, a feeling of choking and wonder if it will arrive in time. You fear that you will die before you reach the hospital.

Nausea and abdominal distress are added to feelings of dizziness while, at the same time you are experiencing an eery type of detachment or unreality. Throughout it all is a strong feeling that you are losing control or going crazy.

You make it to the hospital and the doctor examines you. How shocking to hear the words "This is all in your head".

You see, even though what you have experienced is similar to all the heart attack literature that you have read, what you had was actually a Panic Attack. They involve intense fear with physical symptoms that develop abruptly and peak within ten minutes.

Don't think of elephants. Don't think of elephants. Don't think of elephants. What are you thinking about? Elephants, right. This is how anxiety works. You get exactly what you don't want! "Thinking makes it so".

When you type a word or phrase into a computer, you get a huge number of links in return. In the same way, when you focus on thoughts, your brain, which is a giant computer, gives you what you asked for.

It is sometimes difficult to imagine that we have the power to create a Panic Attack that would seem to be so similar to a heart attack. The good news, is that you are also able to prevent or stop panic attacks with your thoughts.

The first thing to do is to recognize that you are in control. Then you can use specific techniques to de-escalate the Panic Attack. Imagine what you would say to a small child who is afraid. "It's okay", "Take a deep breath", "Relax". These messages are exactly the same ones that will help you to reduce the panic.

Psychologists are trained and experienced in helping individuals to do well in life. They can teach you strategies to reduce or eliminate your anxiety. Don't panic! Help is available.