

Panic Disorder & Agoraphobia: Suggestions For Loved Ones Who Want To Help

Common Reactions of Loved Ones:

- **Bewildered**

“How can this be ‘only’ anxiety?”

“This makes absolutely no sense!”

- **Fearful**

“What if she/he really is dying or going crazy?”

“What if the doctors really have missed something?”

- **Angry**

“Will she/he ever be well again?”

“This is not the person I married!”

- **Helpless**

“I don’t know how to be of any help!”

“Nothing I say or do is right!”

- **Resentful**

“What about my needs, feelings and anxieties?”

“She/he is exaggerating--She/he is trying to control me!”

- **Trapped**

“I can’t leave when she/he is so ill.”

“She/he smothers me--I have no freedom.”

- **Depressed**

“We never have any fun any more.”

“We are never really happy.”

- **Guilty**

“Is it my fault that she/he got like this?”

“Is there something seriously wrong with our relationship?”

• **Worried**

“Will she/he want to leave me after recovery?”

“Will our children turn out like this?”

• **Lonely**

“I can’t burden her/him with my feelings.”

“I can’t tell others what we’ve been through.”

Guidelines for loved ones who want to help:

Strive Not to Say:	Remember to Say:
"Relax! Calm down!" "Control yourself!"	"You can do it no matter how you feel." "Slow down and think of your options."
"Think of something else!" "Do something to distract yourself."	"Tell me what you need now." "Face the fear and it will disappear."
"Don't be anxious!" "Don't be a coward!"	"Go ahead and have the panic now-- I'm here for you."
"You can fight this!" "Let's see if you can do this yet. (test)"	"Stay in the here-and-now." "Don't anticipate."
"Don't be ridiculous!" "You're just being a hypochondriac!"	"Don't add the second fear." "It's not the place, it's the anxious thought."
"Are you okay?" (checking) "You have to stay!"	"I know it feels dangerous but it is not dangerous."
"It's no big deal to get anxious-- I get anxious, too!"	"Don't fight it." "Don't what-if."
"Don't embarrass me!"	"Remember your coping skills."

"When are you going to _____?"	"Breathe low and slow."
"What are you going to do next?" "Aren't you sick of living this way?"	"I'm proud of you." "You're courageous."