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**Healthy Minds**

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## Contacts

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**Psychological support by appointment:**

Mondays to Fridays, from 9:30 to 15:30

**PSYCHOLOGY AND GUIDANCE SERVICE**

**FEUP** FACULDADE DE ENGENHARIA  
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

## Anxiety and Panic

## What are they and how can I deal with it?

# What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal emotional and physiological reaction to the feeling of threat and/or fear that precedes real or imaginary threatening events.

**It may elicit unpleasant bodily sensations such as:** feeling of stomach emptiness, accelerated heartbeat, intense fear, chest tightness, excessive sweating, etc.

**You may feel anxious about general life events**

- **Moving away from home** and/or adapting to college
- Moving to a **new city** or a **new job**
- **Public presentations** or acting in **social situations**
- Dealing with **work** and/or **exams**
- Dealing with **relationships** and/or **lack of relationships**
- **Sexuality** issues
- Preparing to **leave college**

**And also in particular situations**

- Dealing with **authority figures**
- **Choosing a college course** or a **job**
- **Social acceptance** or approval
- **Failure, criticism** or **rejection** by others
- Fears about **own** and/or **close one's health**

**Being anxious is something natural that everybody feels, at different levels, towards different stressful situations!**

# How to deal with it

It is possible and advisable to deal with anxiety and panic at different levels:

**Learning to relax physic and mentally.**

- Exercising relaxation techniques might help to maintain a **state of transversal calmness in any place or situation** (waiting for a meeting, walking down the street, at a bus stop,...)

**Deflect attention from stressful thoughts:**

- **Focus on your surroundings** (try to find a certain color, counting people, review furniture,...)
- Practice **mental activity** (count back from one hundred, try to evoke the names of the people you have been with that day)
- Practice **physical activity**

**Managing anguish or out of control crisis. Having an action plan to know what to do in case of a crisis:**

- **Slow and deep breaths**, trying to focus on that exercise (e.g. thinking of smelling a flower and blowing a candle,...)
- Waiting, **not running away from the situation**. After enough time, fear will eventually go away
- When the crisis is over, **keep the same activity you were doing**
- Understanding that **the crisis, by itself, is not harmful** and nothing bad will happen to you.

Nevertheless, it can be difficult to regulate excessive anxiety levels. **If none of these techniques work, look out for specialized help in Psychology and/or Psychiatry!**

# What is Panic?

**Panic** or a panic attack is a **sudden and intense anxiety crisis** which, regularly takes the person to immediately leave the situation or context they find themselves in.

**It may unfold several physical symptoms and extreme thoughts such as:** feeling of losing control, of going crazy, of having a heart attack or that you are about to die.

Anxiety and panic are often accompanied by feelings of depression, lack of appetite and absence of prospects for the future.

**It is important to be aware of yourself so that you can identify signals of excessive anxiety. If the following signals are present in more than half of your days, for at least 6 months, interfering with your normal daily functioning, you should seek professional help:**

- Having difficulties in focusing
- Forgetting scheduled tasks
- Having troubles falling asleep, waking up frequently and have agitated sleep
- Feeling often fatigued, irritated and with muscle tension
- Having a hard time controlling your preoccupations
- Avoiding important activities because of anxiety.

