

# Helping Someone Through a Panic Attack

- Stay calm; they will react to your over-reaction.
- Confirm that it is a panic attack: “Have you had this experience before?” If yes, “We are going to ride this out. I am here with you.” If no, call 911
- Repeat the person’s name several times through the process. Ask them to follow your direction. Look for tense muscles – ask them to drop their shoulders.
- Reflect what you are seeing (pacing, feeling uncomfortable, wanting to leave, etc.)
- Remind them that they are SAFE.
- Give them permission to do what they need to (e.g. leave or throw up), or express what they are feeling.
- Watch their breathing. Ask them to breathe through their nose if possible, guide them in breathing at a slower pace.
- Ask them to give their anxiety a number from 1-10 (10 being the worst).
- Try to “ground” them. Examples: ask if they would like to sit, ask them to feel the chair beneath them (if sitting), notice different things in the room, listen to your voice, tap their feet, grip and release their hands; use their senses (5 Steps to Mindfulness exercise).
- Check in with their anxiety rating again. It will most likely be lower.
- Repeat the above if needed.

## When it has passed:

- Use encouraging words; “you did it, you stayed with it! How are you feeling?”
- Talk about the experience if they need to.