

What a Panic Attack Log Tells Your Therapist

Becoming a detective for your own physical sensations is an important concept in understanding and managing panic. When I ask patients to record a panic attack log, I am generally looking for seven specific things. Below is the list, as well as what this information actually does to help when we work to further manage your panic attacks.

1. **What was the situation you were in when you had the panic attack?** (This lets me know what your triggers might be)
2. **What was your level of anxiety, from 0-10?** (This helps me to determine if it really was a panic attack. Panic attacks are often a 9 or 10, lasting 10-20 min.)
3. **What were your body sensations/symptoms?** (This lets me know what we need to replicate in order to have your body adjust to, rather than react).
4. **What was your worst fear if your symptoms were to get stronger?** (This lets me know about your interpretation of your symptoms, often referred to clinically as the “catastrophic misinterpretation”)
5. **How much did you believe this fear would come true?** (This is important, as we need to allow you to experience a situation where you can believe something very strongly and yet it might not be true.)
6. **What actually did happen?** (Over time, these experiences serve as proof that the catastrophic misinterpretations didn’t come true)
7. **What did you do to try to prevent your fear from coming true?** (This gives me ideas about what your “safety behaviors” are that, ironically, make the panic stronger in the long run rather than weaker. Don’t worry if you do any of these; for now, it is simply important information).

Using this, you can either ask yourself these questions or use the log. Regardless, it’s most useful to write down the information you’ve gathered as soon as possible after a panic attack so that we have complete and accurate information.