

The Calming Hand

A strategy to help you manage feelings of panic and loss of control

a 10 point plan to help you cope with breathlessness

1. Position yourself comfortably.
2. Have cool air on your face - use a fan or open the window.
3. Take sips of cold water or sharp fruit drinks - these may make your throat feel clearer.
4. Practise relaxed breathing control (see strategies 1 and 2).
5. Listen to music you find relaxing or a relaxation tape or watch TV.
6. Wear loose clothing.
7. Relaxing massage for the neck and shoulders can be helpful, possibly using appropriate aromatherapy oil.
8. Use the Calming Hand and breathing control techniques (see leaflet [Breathing Control](#)) or whatever else helps when you start to feel anxious or panicky.
9. When walking on the flat, breathe out for two steps and in for one step, or out for four and in for two, depending on the most suitable rate for you. When walking on slopes or up stairs remember not to hold your breath. Try to breathe rhythmically in time with your steps.
10. Try to relax your muscles so that they work with you rather than against you.

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Large print version available on request.

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What is the purpose of this leaflet?

This leaflet will introduce you to a way of controlling feelings of panic and managing breathlessness.

Introduction

When you are short of breath it can make you anxious. This in turn can make you more breathless. In this situation some people find that they become very anxious or even panic. Sensations of panic might include:

- tingling sensation in your hands,
- light-headedness,
- fast or difficult breathing,
- palpitations,
- sweating,
- dry mouth,
- feeling out of control and frightened.

The *Calming Hand* is a strategy you can use to remind you how to cope when you experience panic or feel out of control.

Calming Hand

There are five steps (or fingers) to understanding the Calming Hand.

Step 1 - Thumb

Recognition.

Recognise your signs of panic EARLY and take the following steps to regain control.

Step 2 - Index Finger

Sigh out.

As you do, relax your shoulders and arms.

Step 3 - Middle Finger

Breathe in slowly.

Step 4 - 4th Finger

Breathe out slowly.

Step 5 - Little Finger

Stretch and relax your hand.

Sometimes just hand stretching is enough to help when you are starting to panic.

Repeat these steps until you feel calmer.

You may like to cut out the Calming Hand diagram and keep it in your purse or wallet to remind you.

