



WHAT TO DO TO HELP SOMEONE WHO IS HYPERVENTILATING

1. Don't allow yourself to panic. Keep calm, because fear can be infectious.
2. Familiarise yourself with each of the procedures for controlling hyperventilation. Encourage the person to use the procedures.
3. They may need reminding of what to do, so it may help to talk them through it. Don't shout or raise your voice. It should be firm but quiet. Speak slowly.
4. They may become very emotional. Don't get into an argument by disagreeing with what they may be saying. Repeat calming and encouraging statements, such as, 'the symptoms can't harm you... you're going to be all right... that's it, just drop your shoulders... relax'.
5. Afterwards, treat as if for shock, with rest.



I Don't Believe Them - Try Voluntary Hyperventilation

If you find it difficult to believe that the terrifying symptoms experienced during a panic attack can be caused by hyperventilating, try the following experiments.

Exercise 1	Deliberately breathe quickly and deeply through your mouth and nose for 30 seconds and list the symptoms that you experience. This exercise is useful to show how you can both start and stop, and so control these unpleasant symptoms. This experiment is not dangerous but it is probably best to do it with somebody else.
Exercise 2	Breathe through a straw for one minute. Don't allow any air through your nose; hold your nostrils together.
Exercise 3	For people that avoid exercise for fear of provoking a panic attack, exercise with the therapist can be helpful. For example, running up and down the stairs in order to induce a racing heart and breathlessness and then to discover that this does not lead to a panic or heart attack.
Exercise 4	Try to stop breathing (<i>use extreme caution</i>). For people who have a fear they will stop breathing if they do not make a conscious effort to breathe, it can be helpful for the patient and therapist to intentionally hold their breath for as long as possible. This will demonstrate that breathing is a reflex and after a minute or so the rising levels of CO ₂ in the lungs activates a respiratory reflex and forces one to breathe.

Carry out behavioural experiments by trying to deliberately create the physical symptoms of panic. Rate how unpleasant the sensations are from these exercises and rate how fearful you are. Practise the procedures because the more you consciously provoke the symptoms and then turn them off, the more control you will feel. Try to experience the intensity of the sensation. Fear reduction is accompanied by confronting the things that frighten you.