Making Peace With Panic: A Mindful Approach to Understanding and Treating Panic

Over 28% of adults will have a panic attack in their lifetime. Many will experience repeated attacks, which can lead to struggles to hold down a job, maintain friendships, or even carry out basic chores, like shopping for groceries. When we think of panic, we often think of panic disorder. However, individuals with PTSD, depression, social anxiety, substance use disorder, generalized anxiety, and specific phobias frequently grapple with both episodic and chronic panic attacks.

This training will delve into the problems of panic. What is it and why is it so important to treat? Then we'll explore anxiety sensitivity theory, a compelling explanation for why some people develop panic attacks. Next, using the ironic process theory (Wegner, 1997), we'll learn how attempts to suppress panic symptoms actually cause the very thing panic sufferers are desperately trying to avoid. We will then turn to understanding how mindfulness can break panic's vicious cycle. After we study the fundamental elements of mindfulness and their connection to panic, we will delve into helping patients use mindfulness to ameliorate panic and start living life again.

Target Audience

Psychologists Social Workers Counselors
Therapists Psychiatrists Nurses
Course level: Intermediate

Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Describe what a panic attack is and why panic is important to treat
2. Explain what anxiety sensitivity is and how it explains why some people have panic attacks
3. Describe what Ironic Process is and how it can explain panic
4. Describe the three main components of mindfulness
5. Explain how to use mindfulness to help clients cope with panic attacks

Seminar Schedule

The webinar outline is attached. See the Live Webinar page for the start and end times.

Outline

Begin 10 AM ET
Is panic that much of a problem?
What is a panic attack?
DSM-5 definition and symptom list of a panic attack and panic disorder
Having panic attacks without panic disorder
Medical conditions that look like panic
Anxiety sensitivity
A theory of how anxiety sensitivity leads to panic
Evidence for anxiety sensitivity as predictor or panic
Ironic Process
How ironic process relates to panic
Evidence that ironic process contributes to panic
Break 11:30-11:45 AM ET
The three components of mindfulness: paying attention, nonjudgment, nonstriving.
Paying attention
Nonjudgment
Nonstriving
How to treat panic
    Meditation
    Challenges for panic survivors learning meditation
Teaching mindfulness with everyday activities
Diaphragmatic breathing done mindfully
Treating anticipation and rumination of panic survivors
Enhancing exposure therapy
    Building a hierarchy
    Using mindfulness during exposure
End 1:15 PM ET

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The Presenter

Jason Drwal, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist and a staff member of the Iowa City VA Hospital. He has helped hundreds of patients who suffer from panic disorder and PTSD using mindfulness. He is a member of the hospital's APA accredited internship program and he offers numerous trainings on everything from evidence-based therapies for PTSD to smoking cessation. Outside of his role as a therapist, he is a freelancer who has written for local and national publications on mental health issues and he runs the therapist blog www. privatepracticecentral. com.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Laura Davie, LICSW, Tina Jenkins, Psy.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2028.

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