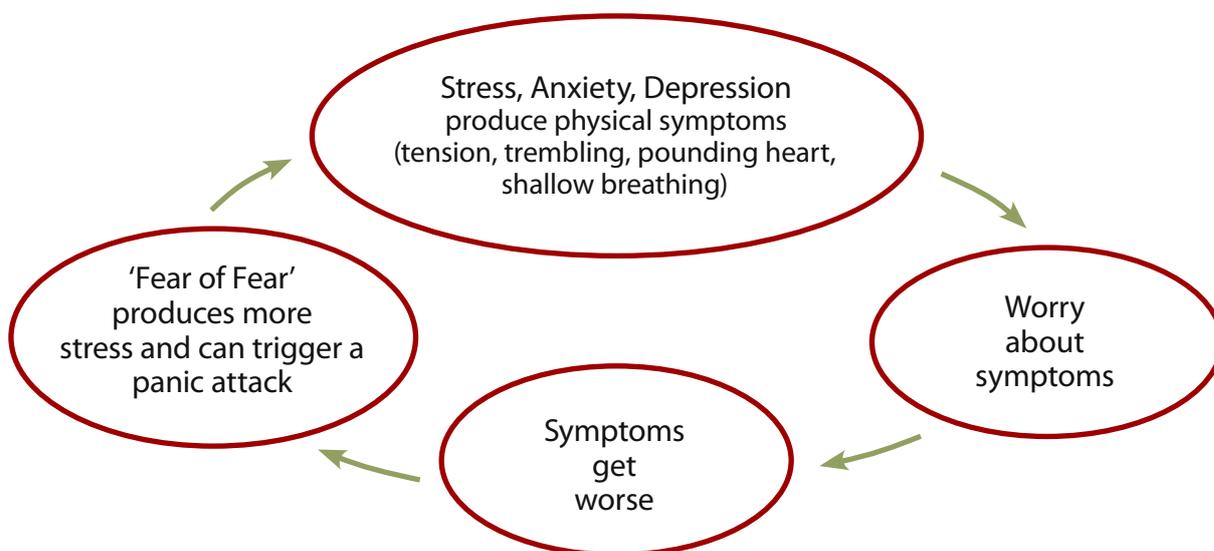


Distraction

How to stop worrying about your symptoms...

Thinking about your symptoms often makes them worse. It can remind you how unpleasant they are, and make you fear that you will get more symptoms ('fear of fear').

Worrying about feeling worse can make you even more anxious and upset. All the worry stops you getting better – which makes you feel even more worried. This causes a 'vicious circle' – which can lead to a panic attack.



If you don't let yourself worry about your symptoms, you will be less upset and anxious, and the vicious circle won't be created. Your symptoms may well go away of their own accord, though you may still have to tackle the underlying cause to break the cycle and stop the symptoms returning.

If you find it hard to turn your thoughts away from upsetting feelings, try these three steps:

- Accept that you may not be able to change the thoughts or drive them away.
- Decide that you will definitely not think about them.
- Then fill your mind with something else – or distract yourself, using one of these methods...
 - Focus on what is happening around you in the outside world – listen to someone's conversation, look in shop windows, and so on.
 - Use your mind – do a crossword puzzle or quiz, do mental arithmetic, read a magazine or sing a song to yourself.
 - Take some exercise - for example, go for a walk, play with the children, or do some energetic housework.

Always try to distract yourself with something you enjoy, or where you mix with other people.

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