

Life... Panic Attack Aftermath – I'm Exhausted

S i t u a t i o n :

I had a whopper of a panic attack on Saturday afternoon while I was driving on the interstate at about 80 m.p.h. I got through it, but it seems like ever since then I feel so tired, even now three days later. Can panic attacks cause physical exhaustion?

A n s w e r :

It's common to feel physical exhaustion after a severe panic attack. The fact that you're feeling tired three days after the event may be because 1. You're diagnosing – trying to figure out "why" you're tired, and 2. You're attaching danger to feeling tired. You may have a vicious cycle going.

Nobody likes feeling tired. Instead of being (staying) concerned that you're tired, tell yourself that feeling tired is distressing and uncomfortable, not at all dangerous. Feeling tired, may not be a fact. One or two good nights of rest will rejuvenate your body, but if your mind is full of "I wonder what's causing this?" thoughts, you're not giving your mind a rest.

Also, feelings are not facts – we may feel tired simply because we're discouraged. Examine your thoughts to see if you have any lingering anger over having the attack in the first place. I'm sure you were disappointed when it hit you – but don't stay mad at your body for reacting the way it did, and don't blame yourself for having the attack. Wellness is a process, it doesn't happen overnight, or even in a month or two.

If you are practicing facing your fears on a regular basis, you are building up your nerve resistance even if you don't think you are. Trust me on this one. Your efforts are paying off.

One more thing. Lots of people with anxiety problems are sensitive to speed, meaning that the faster a car is going, the less control they think they have, therefore the more danger they think they're in. See if reducing your speed reduces the symptoms.