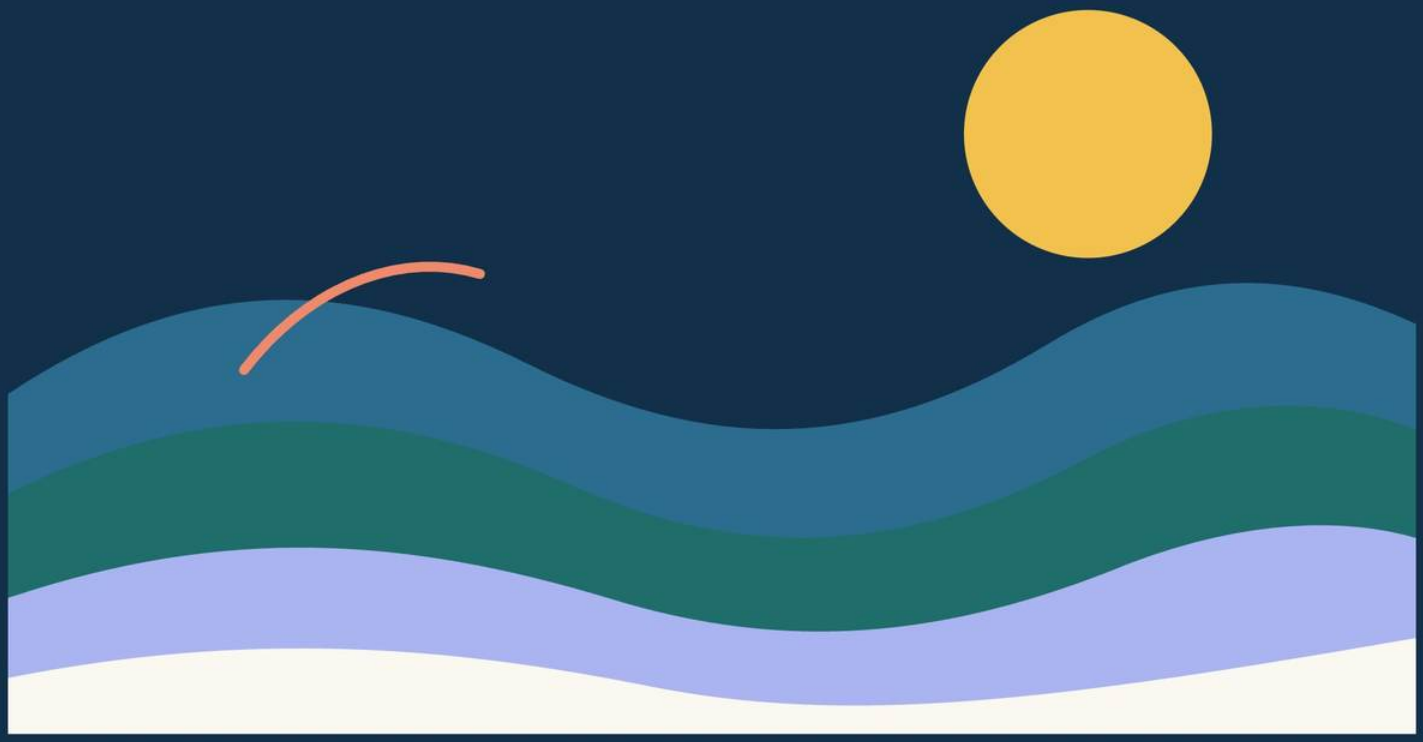
SOAR EDUCATIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY

A COMPANION WORKBOOK



# The Panic Playbook

A coach's guide to riding out panic, and to building your own proof that you can.

**Your survival rate so far: 100%.**

**This playbook belongs to** _____

Nan Kurz, PhD, LPC

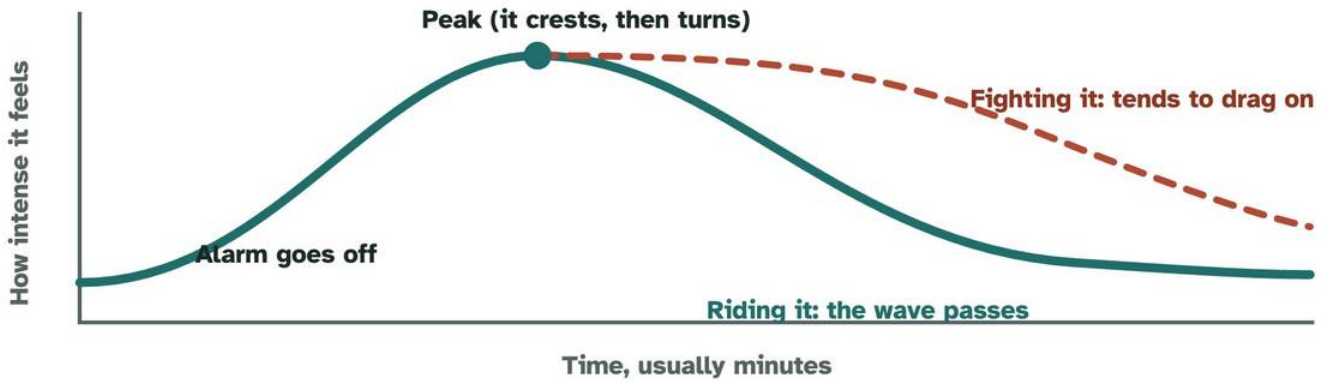
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START HERE

# Panic, in plain English

A panic attack feels like an emergency. It isn't one. It's your body's alarm system going off when there is no fire.

## The shape of a panic wave




### 1. An alarm, not a fire

Racing heart, fast breathing, dizziness: your body is getting ready to act. It feels awful, and it is not dangerous.

### 2. Waves crest, then fall

Panic builds fast and usually peaks within minutes. No wave in history has stayed at its peak.

### 3. Fear of fear feeds it

Dreading the next one keeps the alarm touchy. Practice, not perfection, turns the volume down.

### 4. This is learnable

Panic is very treatable. Confidence builds from experience, and this playbook helps you collect it.

## Why a playbook? Four plays that build confidence

Psychologist Albert Bandura found that people cope better when they believe they can, and that belief grows from four sources. Each play below uses one.

PLAY 1 · P. 4
**My Proof**
Past waves I rode out

PLAY 2 · P. 5
**Borrowed Courage**
Learning from people who cope

PLAY 3 · P. 6
**Coach Voice**
Words that help

PLAY 4 · P. 7
**Read the Body**
Sensations as signals

Page 3 is a one-glance card for the moment itself. See a doctor at least once to rule out other causes, especially for a first episode or chest pain.

RIGHT NOW · PHOTOGRAPH THIS PAGE

# Ride the wave: 5 moves

You don't have to do them perfectly. Do whichever one you can.

1

## Name it.

"This is panic. It's a wave. It will crest and pass."

2

## Feet on the floor.

Press down. Look around and name three things you can see.

3

## Longer breath out.

In through the nose for 4. Out slowly for 6. Repeat a few times.

4

## Say your coach line.

"I've ridden this before. I can ride it again."

5

## Do one small thing.

Sip water. Walk slowly. Or stay put and let it pass. Don't fight it.

**My own coach line**

_____

Wave started at _____ It began to ease at _____ Proof added to page 4: yes / not yet

# My proof

Nothing builds confidence like evidence. Each wave you ride out is a data point, even the messy ones. Collect them here.

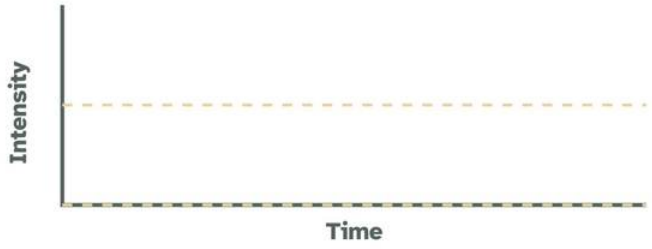
**MOOD BOOST** Fun fact: your survival rate is currently undefeated. No other statistic in your life is that good.

## Waves I've ridden out

| WHEN AND WHERE | HOW LONG | WHAT HELPED, EVEN A LITTLE | WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT ME |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## Sketch my last wave

Draw the line from start, to peak, to calm.




## My proof headline

Fill it in, then read it out loud.

**I've ridden out** _____

**waves, and the longest lasted** _____

**What I do best:** _____

## Small-wins ladder

List five situations you'd like to feel steadier in, from easiest at the bottom to hardest at the top. Practice one rung at a time, ideally with your therapist.

5 _____

4 _____

3 _____

2 _____

1 _____

# Borrowed courage

Watching someone like you cope makes coping believable. These three stories are composites, made up from common experiences. They are not real people.

## Dani, 19

**Panic said:** "Everyone will see me fall apart in this lecture hall."

**What helped:** Dani pressed both feet into the floor, breathed out longer than in, and told herself, "It's a wave." She stayed.

**Afterward:** It crested in a few minutes. Nobody noticed. She added it to her proof log.

## Marcus, 42

**Panic said:** "This is a heart attack. I have to leave this meeting."

**What helped:** His doctor had already checked him out, so he named it: "This is panic, not danger." He sipped water and let it rise and fall.

**Afterward:** He finished the meeting, still shaky, and proud that he stayed.

## Priya, 31

**Panic said:** "If I don't escape this grocery line, it will get worse."

**What helped:** Priya texted her buddy, "Wave starting, no fix needed," and kept breathing out slowly.

**Afterward:** It peaked, then faded. She bought her groceries and savored the walk home.

## My coping models

Real people, characters or heroes who faced fear and kept going. What would you borrow from each?

**1.** _____ **I'd borrow** _____

**2.** _____ **I'd borrow** _____

**3.** _____ **I'd borrow** _____

## My panic buddy plan

A buddy stays calm, doesn't try to fix, and just keeps you company. Ask them ahead of time, not mid-wave.

**My buddy:** _____

**How I'll reach them:** _____

**Text template, ready to send**

"Panic wave starting. I don't need fixing. Just stay with me for 10 minutes, please."

# Coach voice

During panic, the inner voice often turns into a heckler. A good coach is calm, honest and on your side. You can train that voice to show up.

**MOOD BOOST** Fun fact: you would never say "you always fall apart" to a friend. Your friend deserves a coach. So do you.

## Swap the heckler for the coach

| PANIC VOICE | COACH VOICE | MY VERSION |
|---|---|---|
| "I can't handle this." | **"This is hard, and I'm handling it right now."** | |
| "Something is terribly wrong with me." | **"My alarm is loud. I am not in danger."** | |
| "It will never stop." | **"Waves crest and fall. This one will too."** | |
| "I have to get out of here." | **"I can stay, or leave calmly. Either is okay."** | |
| "I always fall apart." | **"I have ridden out every wave so far."** | |

## Coach-line menu

Circle the ones that sound like something you'd believe. Tap one into your phone notes.

- I've ridden this before.
- This is a wave. It will pass.
- My body is on alarm, not under attack.
- I can do hard things slowly.
- Feelings peak, then fade.
- I don't have to fight it.
- Breathe out. Feet down.
- I'm allowed to feel this and keep going.

## Words I'd like to hear

Imagine the kindest, steadiest person you know. What would they say to you mid-wave?

Tip: say it in a warm, slow tone, the way a coach would, and use your own name if that helps.

# Read the body

The same sensation can be told two ways. The alarm story says “danger.” The energy story says “my body is getting ready.” The second tends to calm the wave.

## Sensation decoder

| FEELS LIKE | ALARM STORY | ENERGY STORY |
|---|---|---|
| **Pounding heart** | “Something is wrong with my heart.” | “My heart is pumping blood to my muscles, ready to move.” |
| **Fast breathing** | “I can't get enough air.” | “My body wants more oxygen. A longer breath out will settle it.” |
| **Dizzy or lightheaded** | “I'm going to pass out.” | “Quick breathing shifts blood chemistry. It passes when I slow down.” |
| **Tingling or numb** | “Something is wrong with my nerves.” | “Blood is heading to big muscles. It's a common alarm effect.” |
| **Hot and sweaty** | “I'm losing control.” | “My body is cooling the engine it just revved up.” |
| **Shaky legs** | “I'm about to collapse.” | “Muscles are primed for action. The shake is spare energy.” |

## Rise to it

Research on reappraisal suggests that calling arousal “fuel” instead of “threat” helps people perform under pressure. Try a line like this.

**“This energy is on my side. I can use it and let it pass.”**

## My top three sensations

Write the sensation, then your own energy story for it.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

**Safety notes:** Get a medical check at least once to rule out other causes, especially for a first episode, chest pain or fainting. Practicing on purpose with sensations like dizziness is best done with your therapist, not alone.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY · RECOVERY

# After the wave

Most people rush past the moment panic ends. Pause here. Savoring what went right builds hope and confidence for the next wave.

**MOOD BOOST** Fun fact: you just survived something your brain was sure was an emergency. That's a plot twist worth a snack.

## Savor the survival

Take 60 seconds. What feels even a little better right now?

_____

_____

## Gentle recovery

- ☐ Drink some water and eat something small
- ☐ Move gently: stretch, walk, shake out my hands
- ☐ Tell my buddy the wave passed
- ☐ Do something I enjoy for ten minutes
- ☐ Add this wave to my proof log (page 4)

## Strengths I used

Even if it felt messy, you used something. Circle what showed up.

Courage · Perseverance · Humor · Kindness · Curiosity · Hope · Gratitude · Honesty · Teamwork · Patience · Creativity · Self-control

## The rewrite: "I felt panic, AND I..."

Panic and capability can sit side by side. Finish the sentence three ways.

**I felt panic, and I** _____

**I felt panic, and I** _____

**I felt panic, and I** _____

## One gentle step for tomorrow

Choose something small and doable, not a test. A walk, a call, a favorite meal.

**Tomorrow I will** _____

**I'll know it worked if** _____

# Train on calm days

Athletes don't learn plays during the championship. Two-minute reps on calm days make the skills available when you need them. Tick each day off, and jot how it felt.

**MOOD BOOST** Fun fact: two minutes is shorter than most song intros. You can afford this.

## My 7-day training plan

| DAY | TWO-MINUTE REP | DONE | HOW IT FELT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Day 1 | Say "This is a wave" out loud while doing something ordinary, like brushing your teeth. | ☐ | |
| Day 2 | Feet on the floor. Name three things you can see, slowly. | ☐ | |
| Day 3 | Breathe in for 4, out for 6. Two minutes, sitting comfortably. | ☐ | |
| Day 4 | Say your coach line in a warm voice, to a mirror or in your head. | ☐ | |
| Day 5 | Notice a natural sensation (heart after stairs) and tell the energy story. | ☐ | |
| Day 6 | Reach out to your buddy, or reread one coping-model story from page 5. | ☐ | |
| Day 7 | Savor the week. Add one line to your proof log. Re-rate your confidence. | ☐ | |

### Start of week

How confident am I that I can ride out a panic wave?




**My number:** _____

### End of week

How confident am I that I can ride out a panic wave?




**My number:** _____

## What changed?

Confidence grows with practice. Even a small change counts, and so does "no change yet." Share this page with your therapist.

_____

_____

FOR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND PARTNERS

# For supporters

You can't make the wave stop, and you don't have to. Your calm presence is the most useful thing you can offer.

## Do

- ✓ Stay calm and stay close. Your steadiness helps.
- ✓ Say: “This is panic. It will pass. I'm right here.”
- ✓ Offer water, and a slow pace.
- ✓ Let them lead: ask “Do you want company, or space?”
- ✓ Afterward, name what they did well.

## Skip

- ✗ “Calm down.” It rarely works.
- ✗ Rushing to fix, rescue or leave without their say.
- ✗ Arguing about whether the fear is rational.
- ✗ Quizzing them about symptoms while it is happening.
- ✗ Making them feel like a burden.

## When to get medical care

Call 911 or go to an emergency room for chest pain that feels different from their usual panic, fainting, trouble breathing that doesn't ease, signs of a stroke, or any injury or possible overdose. When in doubt, get checked. A first episode should always see a doctor.

## If someone may be thinking about suicide

Call or text **988** (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline), or text **HOME to 741741** (Crisis Text Line). In immediate danger, call **911**. Stay with the person until help arrives.

## Our plan together

Fill this in ahead of time, on a calm day.

**What helps me most:** _____

**What I'd rather you skip:** _____

**My therapist:** _____

SOAR Educational and Mental Health Therapy · Nan Kurz, PhD, LPC · 201-458-0850. This playbook supports therapy and does not replace it.