



Dealing with Anxiety and Panic during Rock Work

If a person shows signs of panic during a Rock Work process. Stop the process and follow these steps.

Possible signs:

- Verbalized expression of anxiety. “I can’t do this.” “This is too much.” ...
- Physical manifestations such as rapid breathing, nervous body movement, facial tension
- Flat affect, detached presence

When noticing any of these signs check in with the attendee. “How are you doing?” “What are you experiencing?” “How are you feeling?”

If you start to see any signs at the beginning of a process reassure the person that they do not have to do a process. However, recognize that you may want to help them get to a point where they can participate in a process in a safe and meaningful way for them.

Have someone notify a senior person on staff or a trained elder to come and assist with this person. This may be necessary due to the limited number of staff in the Rock Work group, so that you can continue to process the others in the group.

Follow these steps to help the person move toward a calm state.

- 1. Ask for permission to touch. Place hands on upper arms, or hold her hands.**
Don't ever touch a person who's having a panic attack without asking and obtaining definitive permission to do so.
- 2. Instruct the person to open their eyes and look at you. This is grounding the person in the present.**
- 3. Invite the person to breathe slowly with you. Inhale, hold, exhale...repeat as they begin to become more calm.** Encourage them to try to control breathing.
- 4. Reassure them.**
Speak to them in a reassuring but firm manner.
“You’re here now, and you are OK.”

This is a safe space.

We're here with you and for you."

Do not dismiss or write off their fears.

Don't say, "Calm down," or "There's nothing to panic about."

- 5. Offer him/her water (or a cool cloth). Keep them cool.**
- 6. Move them to a place** with little distraction, the two of you sitting down facing one another.
- 7. Speak to the Group.** Depending on the circumstances explain to the rest of the group that you will be taking a few moments to support _____ and instruct the staff to continue. Be aware of how one person's anxiety may impact the group. Be sensitive to this.
- 8. Have another staff person stay with them, if they feel a need to leave the room, or sit with them until they are ready to rejoin the group. Contact the weekend leader or senior staff person and apprise them of the situation. Get support if needed.**

Don't leave them alone.

Don't pressure the individual.

Wait it out.

(Some of the content is taken from <https://www.wikihow.com/Help-Someone-Having-a-Panic-Attack> ...a helpful, brief article to read for further information)