

## **FIRST-AID RESPONSE PLAN PANIC/ ANXIETY ATTACK**

### **SIGNS & SYMPTOMS (not all may be present):**

- Palpitations – pounding heart or rapid heart rate
- Tightness or pain in the chest
- Trembling and shaking
- Chills or hot flushes
- Rapid breathing / shortness of breath
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Nausea
- Rigid and tense muscles
- Numbness or tingling
- Fear of impending doom or death
- A feeling of unreality – feeling strangely detached

### **HOW YOU CAN HELP:**

- **If you require assistance, ask a student/bystander to go to the front desk to call for a first-aider**
- **Do not leave the person alone until help arrive**
- **Ask bystanders/ students to leave the area**

### **FIRST-AID PROCEDURE FOR A PANIC/ ANXIETY ATTACK:**

- Remain calm
- Comfort the person in a reassuring but firm manner
- Ask them if they know what is happening and whether they have ever had a panic attack before
- Check medical history of any breathing difficulties e.g. asthma, current illness etc.
- Take them to an open but calm private space and keep bystanders away
- Reassure them that they are safe and that the symptoms will pass
- If experiencing rapid breathing or shortness of breath, direct the person to make a mask with their hands and put them firmly over their nose and mouth (use a paper bag if available but **never use a plastic bag**)
- Ask the person to concentrate on breathing deeply through the nose and breathing out through their mouth **SLOWLY**
- It can be helpful to count breaths. Ask the person to breathe in and out on your count. Begin by counting aloud, encouraging the person to breathe in for 2 and then out for 2, gradually increase the count to 4 and then 6 if possible until their breathing has slowed down and is regulated.
- If the person is feeling faint sit them on the floor with their back against a wall and direct them to place their head between their knees until the feeling passes
- Stay with and reassure the person until they have fully recovered
- Once recovered, advise the person to rest and obtain medical advice

### **Call an ambulance 999 or 112 if:**

- If this is the person's first time to experience a panic attack or breathing difficulties
- The person does not begin to improve after 15 minutes or further deterioration occurs

**If you are a trained first-aider follow training procedures.**