



When Panic Attacks, Sing “I’ll go crazy, then I’ll die... doo dah! doo dah!”

“He who sings frightens away his ills,” wrote Cervantes. In the case of driving and panic attacks, he might have been right. Psychologist David Carbonell, Ph.D., director of the Anxiety Treatment Center in New York and Chicago and author of *Panic Attacks Workbook: A Guided Program for Beating the Panic Trick*, advocates singing aloud as a simple, drug-free method of preventing and interrupting panic attacks while driving.

According to Carbonell, “A major source of panic symptoms is short, shallow breathing, which produces the same symptoms as overt hyperventilation — labored breathing, a sense that you can’t catch your breath, chest tightness and pain, tingling in the extremities, and so on.” Singing causes you to breathe more slowly and deeply, relaxes your chest muscles, maintains a favorable balance between the oxygen you inhale and the carbon dioxide you exhale, and helps prevent dry mouth and throat.

Refreshingly upbeat about the serious subject of fear, Carbonell considers humor “a great response to panic and anxiety.” An amusing song will probably provide more distraction than a serious one, he says, and to that end, he offers some lyrics of his own (to the tune of “Camptown Races”): “I’ll go crazy, then I’ll die... doo dah! doo dah!” But any song that has positive associations for you — a hymn, a television theme song, an aria — will do.

An audience member from one of Carbonell’s lectures once halted

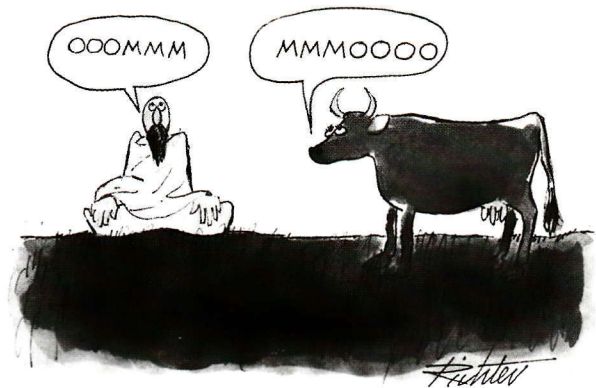
Never put a period where God
has put a comma.

— Gracie Allen quoted in the United Church of Christ’s
God Is Still Speaking Campaign

an attack by singing the national anthem. Singing aloud can be an effective and safe technique, but Carbonell cautions that it is “not a lifesaver, and you don’t need one, because panic won’t kill you. It just fools you into believing that.”

Although singing is not a remedy for panic disorder, it’s a useful way to cope while you investigate your options for a full recovery. And it might get you where you’re going with a smile. For more information about defeating the panic trick, including a video of diaphragmatic breathing, visit anxietycoach.com.

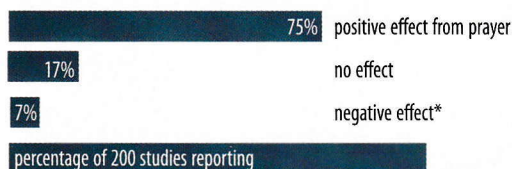
—Ann Stapleton



Science Update

Prayer & Healing

Of more than 200 studies on prayer and healing reviewed by Bob Barth, director of the Office of Prayer Research, he estimates:



*Negative effects can result from personal belief systems — e.g., “God wants me to be sick.”

For more information, see officeofprayerresearch.org.

Why You Shouldn’t Go Alone for a Flu Shot

The phrase “unhealthy social life” has taken on a new meaning, according to a recent study published in the journal *Health Psychology*. First-year Carnegie-Mellon University students who felt lonelier and were more socially isolated than their peers mounted a weaker immune response to a flu shot than did other students, report researcher graduate student Sarah Pressman and psychologist Sheldon Cohen, Ph.D., who led the study. Of the 37 male and 46 female freshmen participants, those whose social networks consisted of fewer people they either knew well or were in regular contact with exhibited a poorer response to one strain of the vaccine, A/Caledonia, than those with greater social ties. And students who said they felt lonely had a poorer immune response to the same strain up to four months after getting the shot. The researchers speculate that the stress of loneliness may translate into weakened immunity, so if you’re planning to get a flu shot, take some friends with you.

—Sheldon Lewis