

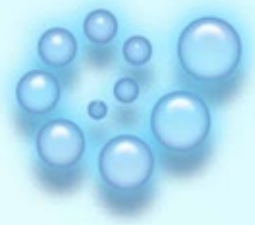
# Avatar

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TeenHelp.org's eZine  
Volume 2, Issue 6 | December 2008







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## Letter from the Editors

Welcome back to TeenHelp and welcome to the first of four "Winter Edition" installments of Avatar, TeenHelp's monthly eZine!

A lot has happened in the past few months that have delayed the release of our December, January, and February issues. We hope you enjoy them nonetheless. Because Avatar content is entirely generated by our readers, we hope you will consider submitting an article, poem, or other work of art to an Avatar Editor for use in a future issue.

In this edition you will find "November in Review," a brief timeline of major news events from November, as well as an article on the benefits of volunteering and an article on panic attacks. As always we invite you to check out the self expression section! Horoscopes will return in the March 2009 issue (Volume 2, Issue 9) which will be released on time.

All the best,  
The Avatar Editors.

## Editors

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Rob (Rob)

**Content Editor**  
Mel (Mel)

**Graphics Editor**  
Jes (Jessie)

**Sub-Editor of News and Debates**  
(Position Vacant)

**Sub-Editor of Mind and Body**  
(Position Vacant)

**Sub-Editor of Entertainment**  
(Position Vacant)

## Contact

Your valuable contributions are what make Avatar what it is. Please submit us your content, whether it be an article, poem, joke, game, photo, drawing or anything else you have to share!

Email us at  
[avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)

# The TeenHelp Times

## November 2008

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### By Jes (Jessie)

#### November 1

- Floods kill 24 people in Vietnam.

#### November 4

- Democrat Barack Obama wins the 2008 US presidential election becoming the first black American to be elected to the office of President of the United States.

#### November 5

- California Prop 8 passes and defines marriage as being between a man and a woman.

#### November 7

- Unemployment in the US reaches its highest rate in 14 years.

#### November 9

- A total of €750 million of cocaine is seized off the coast of Ireland.

#### November 10

- The US government announces a second bailout, roughly US\$150 billion, of American International Group.
- Stocks gain worldwide after China announces a US\$586 billion stimulus package.
- An earthquake of magnitude 6.5 on Richter scale shakes China's Qinghai province.

#### November 13

- Josef Fritzl is charged with murder, rape and enslavement after allegedly sexually abusing and imprisoning his daughter in the cellar of his home.

#### November 14

- General Ann E. Dunwoody becomes the first female four-star general in the history of the US Army.

#### November 15

- Over 1 million people in 300 cities protest the passing of California's Prop 8.
- Israel shuts down Gaza border crossings.

#### November 16

- A 7.3 magnitude earthquake strikes off the coast of Indonesia.

#### November 17

- Citigroup will cut 75,000 jobs by early 2009.
- Japan is officially in a recession.
- Crude oil futures fall by 3.7% to close at \$US54.95 per barrel, the lowest price in 22 months.

#### November 18

- Central European stocks drop to a three-week low on expectations of slowing economic growth.
- Pepsi announces 3,000 layoffs in the US, Canada, Mexico, and Europe.

#### November 19

- The IMF approves a US\$2.1 billion rescue package for Iceland.

#### November 20

- Executives of Ford, GM, and Chrysler testify before Congress for a bailout package.
- French automaker PSA Peugeot Citroën announces plans to cut 2,700 jobs.

#### November 24

- Citigroup receives US\$32 billion from the US Emergency Economic Stabilization Act.

#### November 25

- The US Federal Reserve announces a new US\$800 billion "stimulus" package in which it will buy debt and mortgage-backed securities and make loans to holders of consumer debt.
- In response to rocket attacks, Israel again seals off the Gaza Strip.

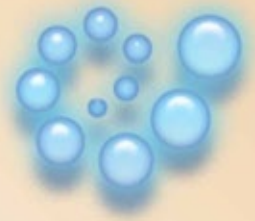
#### November 26

- The EU proposes a €200 billion stimulus package that will include already-spent money.

#### November 28

- As the Christmas shopping season begins in the US, two are shot at a Toys R Us store and a Wal-Mart employee is crushed in a stampede of shoppers.





# Benefits of Volunteering

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By Kathlene (Khadra)

Volunteering is a growing phenomenon, and rightly so! We all know that volunteering is beneficial to those we are serving, but few realize that personal gains are also a large part of volunteering.

## Meet New People

As a volunteer you are likely to come into contact with a diverse group of people. As a result, you will develop interpersonal skills, have the opportunity to make lifelong friendships, and be in the perfect situation for social networking. By meeting new people, new doors will open up, giving you more opportunities.

## Learn New Skills

Volunteering is a great avenue for learning new skills that can be carried over into the rest of your life. These skills may be essential to everyday life, but especially so in the workforce. If you are considering a career but are not sure if it is right for you, volunteering in a similar environment can give you both experience and a better understanding of whether or not it is the right job for you.

## Your Resume

Volunteer work is regarded highly by prospective employers and schools because it shows that you have experience and a good work ethic. This is essential for resumes, where many potential students/employees have similar portfolios, but fewer have volunteer experience.

## Sense of Achievement and Fulfillment

There is nothing quite like the feeling of giving back. By volunteering your time, you will be enriching the lives of others, which is certainly something to feel good about. Utilizing your skills and talents can leave you with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. The experiences you have will be ones you remember and cherish for the rest of your life.

## How to get started

local animal shelter and let them know you'd like to help out. If you live in a city, chances are good that there is a volunteer database you can access (see below). You can also watch for advertisements on community bulletin boards and in local newspapers for ideas and inspiration. Often it is possible to start with something short-term to "try out" the position and see if you'd like to pursue that field. If there is something you're interested in but they aren't asking for volunteers at the moment, don't hesitate to phone and ask them directly if there is something you can help with, or to ask if they'd contact you when there is something available.

### Volunteer databases and information

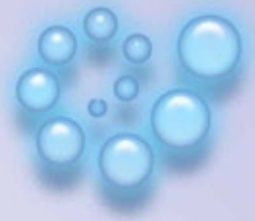
**Canada:** <http://volunteer.ca/>,  
<http://www.govolunteer.ca/>

**United States:**  
<http://www.dosomething.org/>,  
<http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

**Australia:**  
<http://www.govolunteer.com.au/>,  
<http://jobsearch.gov.au/volunteer/default.aspx>,

**United Kingdom:**  
<http://www.do-it.org.uk/>,  
<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/>





# Panic Attacks

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**By Lee (Lee) and Marie (Marie.)**

## **What is a panic attack?**

A panic attack is an unforeseen incident of extreme fear caused by a sudden onset of anxiety. Depending on both the type of anxiety and the situation, there may or may not be an external factor triggering the event. During the panic attack, the body feels threatened and creates excess adrenaline to help defend itself from a perceived attack.

A panic attack can last as short as a few seconds or, in severe cases, as long as a day. Symptoms of panic attacks, which usually peak before ten minutes into the episode and last for about thirty minutes, include:

- \* Rapid heart rate
- \* Sweating
- \* Trembling
- \* Shortness of breath
- \* Hyperventilation
- \* Chills
- \* Hot flashes
- \* Nausea
- \* Abdominal cramping
- \* Chest pain
- \* Headache
- \* Dizziness
- \* Faintness
- \* Tightness in your throat
- \* Trouble swallowing
- \* A sense of impending death

## **What causes a panic attack?**

Unfortunately, exact causes of panic attacks or panic disorders (which are characterized by chronic panic attacks) are not known at this time. However, factors that may play a large part in panic attacks are genetics, significant stress, having been through a traumatic event in the past, big changes in one's life, and "certain changes in the way parts of your brain function." For panic attacks that are triggered by external factors, the body's natural fight-or-flight response causes the intense increase of adrenaline. Causes of panic attacks with no apparent triggers, however, are still vague.

## **How can I prevent panic attacks?**

Panic attacks can be difficult to avoid completely, but there are a few ways to lessen the amount and intensity of panic attacks one has.

1. Learn breathing exercises – if you are able to recognize the signs of a panic attack approaching, breathing exercises can help prevent your body from going into 'defense' mode. If you do end up panicking, the exercises are designed to lessen the amount of carbon dioxide in your blood (a factor increasing the level of panic attacks).

2. Take control of your lifestyle by cutting out extra stress, exercising regularly, eating healthily, and decreasing caffeine, alcohol, and illicit drug intake.

3. If you see symptoms of panic attacks, seek medical advice. There are several medications that can only be prescribed by a health care professional designed to weaken the affects of panic attacks. Once you are given a treatment plan, stick to it and communicate with your doctor about any problems or concerns as often as possible.

4. Get a good amount of rest during the night and get physically active during the day. Once you've gotten a good night's rest and don't feel sleepy or drowsy during the day, get your aerobic activity up--hopefully, it will have a calming effect on your mood.

## **What are coping methods for during/after panic attacks?**

\* Breathe into a paper bag. This is a common treatment for panic attacks, but you do need to bring your face away from the paper bag every now and then for safety reasons.

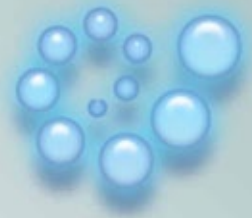
\* Repeat in your head that you are not under attack and that everything is alright. Keep repeating this mentally until your body physically comprehends what it is being told.

\* Practice relaxation techniques. Focus on something such as counting backwards in your head from 100-1. Alternately, try various forms of physical stress management such as yoga, meditation, or guided imagery.

\* Talk to someone – support is always important, and having trusted company with you may help your body to relax. If you feel comfortable with this, consider joining a support group. Talking to others going through similar situations will help remind you that you are not alone in this.







## The wind down...

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### Acknowledgements

#### Image sources

Colored Pencils: [www.everystockphoto.com](http://www.everystockphoto.com)

Press hat: [www.usagold.com](http://www.usagold.com)

### Thanks for reading!

Thank you for taking the time to read this issue of Avatar! Any comments, questions, suggestions or criticisms can be directed towards the editorial team. You can also send us any submissions you have for Avatar, which are a really important part of keeping Avatar alive. We appreciate any submissions that are made to us. We look forward to hearing from you, and hope you enjoy the next edition of Avatar!

The Avatar Editors.

Please visit us at the Avatar page, [www.teenhelp.org/avatar](http://www.teenhelp.org/avatar), or email us at [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org).