

WHAT TO DO IF THE LABORING WOMAN PANICS

Many women ride every contraction of their labor with seeming ease and poise. However, many more feel that some contractions overwhelm them—that they “lose control” or “panic” and call out for

help. The support person can help prevent this panic in some instances or help the mother regain control by being familiar with the “Panic Routine.”

Pre-Panic Signals

Restless or agitated body movements

Role Of Partner

Observe tension, and:

- Stroke it away with both touch and verbal signals (“Release where I touch you, release to my hands.”)
- Apply back pressure if needed
- Talk it away (“Uncurl your toes,” “I’ll hold your hand,” “Take a cleansing breath”)
- Use key phrases from your “special place” to encourage relaxation

Unrhythmical, loud, or irregular breathing

Breathe with her. Start with her pace and slow it if necessary.

Loss of focal point

Eyes darting about or head moving side to side

Keep your face close to hers. “Look at me.”

Verbally giving up

This is a request for support. Acknowledge her pain. Reassure her, praise her, take charge. Try to get her to focus on the power of the contraction rather than the pain. See if you can get her to visualize the cervix opening up and the baby moving down. Use as much of the “Panic Routine” as needed.

Panic Routine for Labor Partner

1. *Establish eye-to-eye contact*—Position yourself so that your face is directly in front of hers. You may need to stand up.
2. *Hold her firmly*—Take either her hands, shoulders, or face in your hands to focus her attention on you. If she pulls away from you, do not give up; re-establish physical contact.
3. *Breathe with her*—Tell her to breathe with you. Breathe loudly or use words or blows so that she

can easily follow you. Begin at her pace and guide her to slower, quieter breaths as she follows you.

4. *Reassure her*—After the contraction is over, assure her that you will be there to help her with each contraction. Remind her that each contraction brings her closer to the birth of the baby. Words of encouragement and support from you, the nurse, and your caregiver can make all the difference in the world.