



Fear of Flying

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Now that summer season with all its travelling is in sight (we) may more often be confronted with (friends and associates) who report about fear of flying.

A fear of flying is a specific phobia, one of several kinds of anxiety disorders. It is a level of anxiety so great that it prevents a person from travelling by air, or causes great distress to a person when he or she is compelled to travel by air. This may prevent a person from going on vacations or visiting family and friends, and it can cripple the career of a businessperson by preventing him or her from traveling on work-related business.

Fear of flying is more common than you might expect it to be. Almost every second person does at least feel somehow uncomfortable when it comes to flying. There are a lot of famous persons who confess to it: Whoopi Goldberg, Jennifer Aniston, David Bowie, and Winona Ryder all report fear of flying.

Statistics from the Department of Transportation saying that airline travel is 29 times safer than driving an automobile does not help people who are afraid of going by plane. This is because the fear of flying isn't really about the risks inherent in aviation, it occurs because flying makes us aware that life is fragile and vulnerable, and that none of us has any real control over it, whether in the air or on the ground.

For a minority of people there are medical concerns when it comes to flying, such as inner ear problems and traveler's thrombosis. People being affected by this kind of problems should see their family physician before entering a plane. For most people however it is not about physical risks, it is more like a free ticket to a 'best of' directors cut of all air-plane-catastrophic movies of the last 30 years.



Fortunately there are strategies to choose to manage fear of flying:

1. Education
People often have difficulties believing that it is possible for such a big machine built out of metal to fly like a bird and stay safely in the air. Therefore it is helpful to learn how an aircraft works. Believe it or not, most people do not know that even if all engines fail a plane wouldn't fall straight down but is still be able to glide for a very long time.
2. Relaxation
Different relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation, autogenic training, and progressive muscle relaxation should be practiced in the weeks before the flight so that people can easily use them on the plane.
3. CBT
Identifying core beliefs and replacing them helps people to get rid of unrealistic scenarios closely related to going by plane
4. Distraction
If the anxiety is mild it might be helpful to distract yourself while flying by reading a book, listening to music, playing a computer game, or watching a movie.
5. Therapeutic approaches
There are a variety of therapeutic models available. For some people hypnotherapy may help, others may prefer examining the reasons for their anxiety by choosing psycho-analysis. All big flight companies also offer courses to help participants to overcome their anxiety.
6. Medication
Depending on a person's choice, medication can help calming people as well. But their impact is never longer than for a single flight.

<http://www.anxietydisordersontario.ca/>

<http://www.palverlag.de/Flugangst.html>

<http://www.onmeda.de/krankheiten/flugangst.html?p=7>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear_of_Flying

<http://www.guidetopsychology.com/fearfly.htm>