

A Short Course to Overcome your Fear of Flying

by

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Author's note The techniques suggested in this book have been used by many people but do not constitute a guarantee that they will work for everyone.

A Short Course to Overcome Your Fear of Flying

Hello I'm Captain Keith Godfrey and I'm going to help you to address your fear of flying. I learnt to fly back in 1959 when I was 16 and now I've got 20,000 flying hours experience, I've spent my whole life in aviation and in that time nothing has ever happened to me. To me flying is perfectly safe and perfectly normal, it's as natural to me as any thing else I do.

Welcome to this book to help you overcome your fear of flying. This course is conversational in style and less structured than with say, an educational course. With a subject as big as a fear of flying, with so many different needs to be addressed, and with such a wide range of people suffering from a fear of flying I have written the course in a way that would be like having a long conversation with someone about their fears. I want the course to be relaxing and easy to read. On occasions it will appear to be random in its direction and content, but this does have an important message, and that is that there are no quick fixes, no one size fits all solutions, no miracle cures, but that you may need to consider many routes to overcoming your fear. Only you can decide how to arrange and use the help and information that I'm suggesting. Remember that every subject is related to every other, so no individual part stands alone. No part is more or less important than another. Everything is connected and related to every other part. Nothing is stand alone ... but you have to make your own connections.

I believe that when you apply the things I suggest in this book that you will see flying as a much more normal thing to do than you do now. Be confident that you can, and that you will overcome your fear of flying. You must throw away any doubts that you have about overcoming your fear of flying.

The chances are that you will succeed so I'm going to encourage you to be positive about the outcome of this course.

Imagine two pieces of paper, on one you have written your feelings about flying ... but these feelings are *your facts*. I cannot dispute them but what I am going to challenge are the conclusions you draw from them. These incorrect conclusions have led you to where you are now.

On the other piece of paper I have written all my Facts about flying. You must trust me that I won't tell you anything that isn't true ...if I were to, and you found out then you wouldn't trust anything else that I say. I promise to be truthful.

What we are going to do is to slide my piece of paper over your piece so that your feelings are gradually replaced by my facts. But we are not going to remove all your feelings because that would be unrealistic, you are allowed to have some feelings of anxiety after all you're human and trying to contain all your feelings might cause the pressure to build up too much. You need a bit of a safety valve where you can 'relax'. It's being human that lets you have or gives you a fear of flying. The fear of flying is NOT a weakness. It's just the way you are right now. Don't fret about having the fear, it's allowed.



Let's start by asking you to set your desired outcome, when your fear is conquered, what would you like to be able to do? It should be something achievable like "I want to fly with less anxiety than I have

now.” or “I want to be more confident when I’m flying” or “I’d like to be able to control my stress levels when I’m flying”. I doubt that you want to go wing-walking at a flying circus!

You will see that these outcomes set general needs rather than specific ones. If you say to yourself that you want to go flying without any worries at all then you are more likely to miss your target. Set yourself achievable aims. I suggest that rather than trying to get to the top of the mountain, you just try to get as high up as you can each time you try.

If success is only when you get to the top, then every time you fail to get to the summit you’ll be disappointed, so, you should set your target as trying to get as far up the mountain as you can each time and then you will always succeed. Each time you climb (or fly) you’ll learn something that will help you for the next occasion. Try to see every step as success, and, not succeeding sometimes is a part of your journey. Always remember what you have achieved, not what you have failed to achieve. Expect and accept some setbacks as a natural part of overcoming your fear.

To make this course as effective and useful as possible, I’m going to confine myself to the most important facts and, in return I want you to give complete commitment to everything I suggest on this course. I don’t intend to say anything that isn’t directly related to overcoming your fear.

Remember that almost 40% of the population are anxious about flying so you’re not alone, and the flyingwithoutfear.com web site is available to give you as much support, encouragement and help as you need.

We’ll cover everything from how you feel, the causes of fear, what fear really is, and what you can do to overcome your fear. We shall include sections on why aeroplanes fly, how you should prepare, and some strategies that you can use to overcome the nervousness that occurs before you go flying and, when you are flying. I’ll give you some advice on relaxation and breathing techniques later in this program.

The first advice I want to give you is to “stay in the present”, and by that I mean don’t start thinking of the future just yet. It’s more than likely that you will think that the most important part of this book is at the end where there will be a magic formula or technique to overcome your fear. This is not true. The statement ‘Staying in the present’ may happen to be your particular key to success. Throughout the course I hope that there will be other key statements that may appeal to you as a way of dealing with your anxieties.

The most important part of this course is the fact that everything is linked and related to the eventual outcome, and any part of it may be your key. For example, it may seem unlikely that getting a good night’s sleep or attending to your diet or drinking water will help you to overcome your fear and, to an extent that is true, but without attending to your well being your body and mind will not respond well to the demands that you're putting on it.

As I’m sure you know that worrying about flying is very tiring, this lowers your defences, so the energy you use to fight off the negative thoughts won’t be available for helping you. You need to be as fit and healthy as possible. I know that for some people your battle with this fear starts before the tickets are even bought. Perhaps this applies to you?

We know that we perform at our best when we are well rested and prepared, and those of us who are parents will be familiar with trying to persuade our children to rest before taking examinations. We know from experience that a rested mind and a rested body will act and think more clearly and effectively than a tired mind and a tired body. It doesn’t add to what you know but it does allow you to access what you do know. Physical and mental tiredness upsets your thinking processes, and this will make you more prone to anxiety. The problem is that feeling well rested doesn’t feel very different from feeling ‘normal’ and so we can’t imagine feeling much better than we do right now. Ask an athlete if physiological and mental health make any difference!

I want you to remember that important point whenever I talk about simple things that I suggest you do which may seem a long way from the final outcome. Lots of little differences will make one big difference. And that difference might be remaining as you are now or, being able to go flying without fear. The process is called the aggregation of marginal gains. Try to be 1% better at everything. There are lots of things about the fear of flying that you can be better at. Less worry, fewer myths, more confidence, strategies and plans.

To help you to succeed and to make things easier for you I want you to hand over your fears to me for safekeeping. I'm serious, you can't listen properly if you've got thoughts going on in the back of your mind, so for just a few hours I'll look after them... if you want them back at the end of this book, then just let me know and I shall return them. One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is believing that you will be able to fly with less anxiety than you have now. I want to encourage you to believe that you can, and that you will overcome your fear because all the evidence points to that fact ...people who do something to address their fear, almost always succeed.

Many people believe that their worries and anxieties actually help to make their flight safer. I have to say that this is not true. It may feel as if it's true but it's not. What I'm going to ask you to do is to trust yourself and, if you trust yourself then you will make rapid progress. Develop a new you. A new you, with new attitudes and new beliefs. Regardless of how you feel now, the chances are that you will overcome your fear but you must promise yourself that you will do as many of the things that I recommend in this book.

The first thing you might want to consider is what your fear actually is and how it started? Apart from deep rooted psychological reasons, a fear of flying can usually be traced to a bad experience or a mis-understanding about flying. People that have general anxiety problems are more disposed to a fear because it is more in their nature to feel anxious. People with claustrophobia or have an extra burden but for the rest of us, there's normally an obvious reason. I'm sure you know that fear is nature's way of helping you to protect yourself. However we are stuck with who we are and we have to make the best of our strengths and try to overcome what we perceive to be weaknesses. One of the first things I say to people when they approach me about their fear of flying is that the fear of flying is

not a weakness it is just the way that you're made. The fear of flying is not a weakness it is just the way you are.

Some causes of the fear of flying.

Turbulence is very very common ...and we'll talk in detail about that later. The strength of the plane worries some people ...so they think the wings will fall off or that all the engines will stop. Becoming a parent or falling in love can make us feel vulnerable and more open to risk. We call that a significant life event ...or at least the psychologists do. When we fly we feel unable to give our children the protection they deserve, and would feel guilty if anything happened to them while flying. Some parents get an overwhelming sense of guilt about leaving their children if they have to take a flight. Having to take a flight and leave a loved one behind makes people exaggerate the normal risks of life.

Sometimes a significant event in life can trigger a fear. Many people don't like to give control of their lives to people they don't know. Quite often a bad experience, or what is believed to be a bad experience, can be very upsetting and be the starting point for a fear of flying. Some people are defined by their fear. Some people don't like taking off, or flying at night or over water. People who are generally anxious about life often find, that flying is an extra burden and many of these worries are projected on to flying.

That is not the complete list of course and may not include your worries but that doesn't matter either because the very fact that you have, as the psychologists would say, "self-selected" to read this book means that the chances are you will respond positively to it.

As our starting point we are going to look at the way people behave when they have a fear of flying, not you individually but how most fearful flyers behave. People who have a fear of flying behave in characteristic ways, in other words they *do* certain things and they *think* certain things, if we can identify those things and learn to avoid them then we shall start to make progress.

Let's think for a moment about someone who plays tennis well, one of the things they strive to do is to avoid giving points away. They work on the assumption that if they can get the ball back over the net, then the chances are that their opponent may not be able to return the ball. In other words they try not to do things wrong ...they leave that to their opponents.

And what you should do is behave in a way that doesn't make things worse, you need to win every point. If we learn about flying and replace the myths and misunderstanding with facts, then we have removed a source of worry. If we use language that is factual rather than emotional we will remove another source of worry. If we eat and sleep well, we will benefit from doing positive things because we shall be able to think about things more rationally.

In fact there are many things that we can do to be positive but first we must learn to avoid being negative. Think of a parachutist and it's easy to understand that he or she is likely to be very nervous before their first jump. But some of their nervousness will be moderated by their training. It is their training that will get them prepared for their first jump and it is their training that will enable them to do it.

What I am suggesting to you is to train or prepare properly for the times that you take a flight. The flight after reading this book will be your 'first' flight. Most people believe that they have overcome their fear of flying only when they get on an aeroplane and fly somewhere, but getting over their fear of flying, here on the ground, will enable them to get on an aeroplane. And preparation and practice will give you the strategies and techniques to deal with anything that might happen on board. Taking the flight is a small part of the task. Preparation is the biggest and most important part.

The feelings and thoughts that I have described are common to everyone who has a fear of flying, so what we are going to do now is to look at some of those things in more detail and find ways of restructuring your thoughts. But before I finish this section let me just tell you of a lady who was going to come on one of our seminars. The day before she phoned me to say that she wouldn't be able

to come. When I asked her the reason she said that she was frightened of flying, if she came on my course and I cured her of her fear then she would have to go on holiday, and she didn't want to do that because she would have to fly ...and she didn't like flying!

I can understand how she felt, it was impossible for her to imagine herself in the position of being able to fly, fortunately I was able to persuade her that if she succeeded on the course then she wouldn't feel the same way about flying. I'm pleased to say that she went flying after the course. Perhaps you feel like that right now, perhaps you think that when you go flying you will feel as you do now but of course you won't. You will have a different attitude to it, and you will be more confident about it.

I cannot cure your fear of flying. But I can help you to cure yourself. Perhaps you need to take a big breath to start, let's do that and start on the journey to overcome your fear of flying.



Fearful Flyers

The things that fearful flyers think about themselves and flying are as follows.

Number One, they always see it as a weakness.

Number two, they always look for facts that support their fear.

Number three, they talk in a language which encourages and maintains their fear.

Number four, they look for negative things about their fear and anything to do with aeroplanes.

Number five, they rarely try to do anything positive about it.

Number six they watch the weather in the hope that they can change it.

Number seven they read and look at media nonsense about flying rather than believing facts.

Number eight, they believe that they will have a panic attack or lose control of themselves in flight.

Number nine, that if they had a successful flight than the next one won't be, or that they were lucky.

Number ten they spend a lot of time making 'what if' statements. What if this happens what if that happens, what if, what if?

Now then, if while I'm sitting at my desk I can think of those 10 things without any effort then it must show that they really are many common features amongst people with a fear of flying. If we can do something about any, or all of those habits you will become more positive about flying.

Some people believe that unless they think about all the bad things that can happen then something bad will happen, it's as if worrying solves or removes the problem. Worrying doesn't solve any problem in fact what it does is to make the problem worse, or make the perception of the problem worse because the facts about flying don't actually change. Safety doesn't depend upon what fearful flyers think, it depends upon what we in commercial aviation actually do. Flying is safe, and curiously many fearful flyers accept that flying is safe but curiously, they reason or they believe that because they've had happy lives or because of this or because of that then suddenly the forces of nature will conspire and turn against them and they will become an 'unlucky' person. They say it will probably happen to me! Well it probably won't and that's a fact.

It's worth mentioning at this stage what probability is. Probability is the mathematical chance of something happening. But what fearful flyers do is to take a possibility and call it a probability. Possibility is quite different. Let me explain that more: it's possible that next year I could be the Prime Minister of England or the head of United Nations, it's possible because in life almost anything is possible but, it is not very probable is it?

The actual chances of fearful flyers' 'possibilities' really happening are very very slight. In fact they are highly improbable. What fearful flyers do is to think of everything is that is possible and imagine that it will come true, in other words turn it first, into a probability and then into a certainty. Not only, they say, it will come true but that it will come true when they are flying. Because, they argue it has to happen to someone so why shouldn't it be them. But falling down the stairs, or being kicked by a donkey, has to happen to someone but I doubt whether it is happened to them, so why pick on aeroplane accidents? This is selective thinking but these are natural thoughts at times of anxiety and as we shall see later that there are ways of preventing thoughts like these, and the benefits will be obvious.

So in this first part there are a mass of thoughts and actions that need to be addressed, we will go through them and of course add more help and information as we go along. I'm going to repeat now

the thing that I said early on and that is in order to succeed and overcome your fear of flying you really have to have a 100% commitment, you will not overcome your fear of flying with a half-hearted effort.

Fear is insidious, it will attack you when you are weak it will attack you when you feel tired or worried or anxious so we need every defence in place ready to combat the random fears that feed your anxiety about flying. In the next section we are going to see how our minds work in dealing with information about flying, and why for instance our minds are more inclined to believe that we are more likely to die in an accident even though we are 15 times more likely to die from an illness. And goodness knows how many times more likely we are to die of old age.

Here's a useful question. Where do we store our thoughts and turn them into memories? Where do we change our thoughts and emotions into things that we remember? Let's imagine that our minds are like an address book. Imagine that the way we put addresses in the book is like the information we store in our brains. We put the names of our friends and family in the book, we wouldn't think twice about putting the name of someone we disliked into the book. By the way ...how many of us have the number of the Inland Revenue in our address book? The entries are under our control; we choose friends and family we do not choose the Inland Revenue or people we don't like. We also assign the information alphabetically by first name, surname, company or whatever we choose. If we don't put the information in like that and we're looking for a person called Alice Young we would need to look to every section apart from the letters zed. It would be very inefficient but at least we'd hold ourselves responsible for the chaos.

Or let's imagine our minds to be like a computer. We work on whatever we are doing and the computer automatically says this is a Word document or a photograph, video, sound file or whatever. We have no choice or at least very little choice in deciding what type of file the computer makes, but what we can choose is where we store it. We can make a new folder or add it to an existing folder, or put it on a hard drive, on a disk ...in fact a whole range of choices. If we decide that it isn't relevant then we can delete it and then when we are certain that we shall never need it again we can even

delete it from the recycle bin. While I'm talking about computers I'd like you to imagine that your Flying Hard Drive is corrupted and we're going to re-format it.

If only our minds were like an address book or a computer. If only we had a choice of what goes in and what is stored and what is deleted. We certainly don't have a choice about what goes in because we cannot prevent ourselves from hearing or seeing what goes on in the world. So the good stuff goes in ...and so does the bad. And by the bad stuff in this context of course I mean all the negative thoughts you have about flying. But it's even worse than that because the harder we try not to think of something then the more likely we are to reinforce the thoughts in our memory.

If I ask you now not to think of your front door and not think of an iceberg then I can guarantee to name two things that you are most definitely thinking about. It's pretty obvious what happens when you try not to think of your fear of flying. But again it's worse than that because your thoughts become part of your memory and unlike your decision to include an address in your address book or a file on your Flying Hard Drive, those negative thoughts will be auto-saved and sit there (on your brain's desktop) waiting for an opportunity to reveal themselves. They store themselves automatically. They copy themselves into every part of your memory. Unlike our PC's we never have to do a search for 'files' containing negative thoughts.

Even trying to delete them reinforces them. This means that scattered around your long-term and short term memories are countless thoughts over which, at the moment, you have no control. Like a computer virus that goes looking for a file to infect, your bad thoughts will link to everything that you do and think of in everyday life.

For instance; a programme on the television advertising holidays might bring back memories and thoughts of the happy times you have had or that you might expect. But what else happens? How do is recalled. Unlike a computer where if we've lost or forgotten a file we have to start a search ...if you've got a fear of flying, the search for the fear files starts automatically. Your fear is a virus, it is Spy ware or a Trojan that has got on to one of or all of your personal hard drives. We'll need some

high quality software to remove it and some high quality software (your determination) to permanently protect against it. As you know we're installing it right now.

Here's how the virus works. Perhaps you are having a conversation about bad weather, along comes the virus called turbulence which attaches itself to your conversation. Perhaps you are talking about your children leaving university and taking a gap year. How will they get to Europe or Australia or America, yes they will be flying so along comes another virus called 'I don't like flying over the sea' which brings the virus called turbulence along with it plus the one that says I don't like the noise on takeoff to which brings along the thought that the engines might stop whose virus friend is called 'I think the wings will fall off'.

A constant and endless reminder that you don't like flying. But it's still worse than that, because now you have reinforced the thoughts that you didn't want to have. This cycle will have been going on for years and years so is it any wonder that it seems impossible to overcome? Remembering negative things reinforces them. Trying to forget them reinforces them. The only way to deter them is with FACTS.

But that's how it is, if we let thoughts in without structuring them or having a place for them to be in our minds then they settle anywhere and everywhere and your negative thoughts become very well established; we're going to have to unlearn or remove them. This is the size of the task. Imagine trying to learn mathematics where you learn that two times two is not six or eight or 17 or 1 or 276 but four. Where 100 divided by 10 is not 13 or 6 or 272 or 4036 or 12 but 10. Imagine having to delete or remove or forget everything that is wrong before learning the correct answer.

That is how you are trying to overcome your fear. You have lots of wrong answers and they are preventing you from getting the right answers but as long as you know it ... then you can do something about it and that's what we are doing on this course. Just a couple more things on this subject, it is an educational fact that where we learn something is where we are likely to remember it. It is more likely that you will remember the words of a nursery rhyme when you are in the company of

children than when you are scuba-diving around the Great Barrier Reef. You are more likely to recall how to clear your oxygen mask when diving around the Great Barrier Reef than when standing at a bus stop.

Your problem is that you have learned to be fearful of flying almost everywhere but most certainly when you are involved in flying. So what are the chances when you look at a holiday brochure, try to buy a ticket, go to the airport or get on a plane that you will forget all the fears that you have collected through your lifetime? Pretty slim ...unless you have a strategy.

What we have to do, and you'll be pleased to know that it's a relatively simple task, is to replace all those bad thoughts, all those negative thoughts with positive ones. You need to restructure in your mind those bad experiences that you think you have had on an aeroplane and give them a shape which you can understand. When you understand the facts then you eliminate the possibility of bad thoughts, negative thoughts, from taking hold. And one of the most effective ways of structuring and implanting good thoughts is to use the correct words to describe them. Using positive and correct words.

And though we will talk about this more fully later I will give you an example right now. People often say to me that they were in an aeroplane that plummeted. Now in my 30 years as an airline pilot and even more years as a flying instructor, I never once plummeted. I often descended, sometimes I went down, sometimes I had a high rate of descent but I never ever plummeted. When I learnt to fly if my instructor had said to me "and now we are going to learn to plummet." then I probably would not have become a pilot.

Review

Remember our minds and our memory system can be compared to an address book or a computer but without the opportunity to stop wrong addresses being put in, and without being able to delete files.



Words thoughts and actions

Let's think of all the ways that unhelpful thoughts come into your mind and lodge themselves in your long-term memory. The biggest culprit has to be the media, all the people that I have ever met who have a fear of flying have said that their fear has been made worse by the press and by television programmes. I could make this the shortest chapter on the course by saying.

Number One; don't read press reports concerning air travel and particularly accidents.

Number Two; don't watch so-called documentaries about air safety.

Number Three; don't research the Internet for information on airlines, aircraft or air safety.

And that's all there is to it if you can avoid doing those things and forget anything you've ever read or heard about the dangers of aviation then you will have made an enormous amount of progress.

But of course I understand that real life is different from theory and I think it would be unreasonable for you to just accept my word without some more explanation. There has been great deal of research into the influences of media information on the fear of flying. For instance a major aircraft accident in Europe some years ago was hardly reported in the Australian press; however an incident in Australia involving a local airline was given considerable coverage although the accident was far less serious. An incident in Europe involving a freight aircraft where there were three fatalities was widely reported abroad, though the carnage caused by road vehicles involving more than 3000 deaths, in the same country in the previous year, went unreported. The press has to sell news and will report events according to the 'interests' of their readership and circulation.

The effect of distorted reporting is to persuade us to believe that the more spectacular incidents occur more frequently than the ones with which we are familiar and which we are more likely to be involved in, for example car accidents and illness.

Over a period of 12 months two newspapers reported 528 cases of death by homicide and one article involving a death as a result of diabetes. A survey conducted at the same time revealed that the public perception was that the death by murder was four times as great than death by diabetes. In fact death by diabetes was far more likely. It just didn't get reported as much. So it's not unreasonable then to assume that newspaper reports influence the way we think of risk. Although we may have the statistics available, we are more likely to be influenced by the style of reports rather than its content. Lurid and detailed reports stay in our minds and confirm a natural bias about the dangers of flying. There is a lot of evidence to show that highlighting the dangers associated with air travel, especially for people who already have a fear, will tend to increase that fear.

During my career I have had more access to reports of aircraft incidents and accidents than you have and yet I have never been persuaded that flying is anything other than the safest form of transport available. Because I know the facts, I am uninfluenced by my emotions and I disregard any attempt to involve them by the style of reporting. Unfortunately the modern trend of news broadcasting and media coverage is geared to the emotive spectacular and sensational. The subject of air travel is a perfect subject for journalists short of a story or headline.

We know that a fear of flying can be developed by a child because of the attitude and behaviour of the parents, and so this learning by example can be extended to susceptible people who read reports about aircraft and aviation. So far I have confined my comments to newspapers who have just headlines and still pictures to send their message.

How much more powerful then is are the moving visual images that we get on the television or YouTube. I have never had an interest in air disaster programs or so-called 'inside stories' on what might have happened but I am often asked to comment on them. As a result I have tried to watch a number of programmes which had been available on satellite television. I have to say that it has been very difficult to watch such programmes any longer than a few minutes, I now say jokingly the they are to flying, what Dr Kildare was to brain surgery!

The depiction of how a pilot flies in aeroplane is so far from the truth is to be laughable. Pilots hanging onto the controls in the style of a Hollywood movie are simply untrue. Quite often the technical facts are highly questionable and for the most part unreliable. There are a number of retired accident investigators who make a living by appearing on these programmes. I'm very doubtful that they conducted their accident investigations with the same sensationalist style that they use when appearing on television. Perhaps I do them an injustice and should reserve my criticism for the editors of the programs, but whatever the reason; the facts take second place to ratings.

The reporting of an incident at Heathrow airport some while ago was so distorted as to be comic. A television reporter referred to accident investigators as 'the men in white coats' suggesting that there were some extra mystery, some unfathomable fact that only they could discover. The reporter then tried to link one technical feature of the plane with a quite different one. Clearly he had no understanding of the relationship between how and aeroplane is controlled and its engines. And yet he pursued this line of pointless enquiry for at least half the programme. The whole report was misleading, ill informed and highly inaccurate and yet was broadcast around the world.

I'm sure that you have an area of expertise that is often reported in the newspapers and I can only ask you to compare what you know about your subject and the way it is reported and use that as the basis for interpreting media reports. Much better than wasting your time watching drivel concerning planes, just learn to ignore them. Never ever be tempted by them. Never ever believe that they will enlighten you. Never ever believe what they say. I'm sure that you can tell that I am no fan of the media but why should I be when they do so much damage to vulnerable people?

There is a link in between what I have been saying and what I shall talk about next. We've been talking about media reporting. Reporting uses words, and the type of reporting we have been talking about uses sensational words, and as if by some strange coincidence, they are the sort of words that people who have a fear of flying tend to use. This is not unreasonable we would hardly expect people who are anxious about flying to use the sort of terminology or vocabulary that I as a pilot would use.

Why should they? They have neither the knowledge nor the need. Or at least they haven't had the need until now. As I said earlier I never learned to plummet neither did I ever learn to strain the engines on takeoff I certainly didn't learn to fly through thunder storms or to bank too steeply or land on runways that were too short. In fact there is hardly a thing that I learned to do that fearful flyers ever experience, yet many things that I didn't learn to do seem to happen all the time to anxious flyers, so somewhere there is a bit of a misunderstanding. Before we change those misunderstandings into facts let's have a few more thoughts about words.

There is a psychological school of thought which believes that we see the world in the way that we describe it. In other words if a person described a town as modern with libraries restaurants and good car parking facilities they would tend, any is only a tendency, to see life as things. Someone else may describe the same town and by the people who inhabit it and the cultural activities that happen there. They would tend, and again I emphasise the word tend, to see the world through what people do. There are other ways of course, some people see life through pictures, emotions or sounds and so on.

Quite often life coaches and personal trainers will encourage us to change our view of what we see as an obstacle, into an opportunity by using positive words and thoughts rather than negative ones.

For example to see the fact that we have lost our job as an opportunity to find a better one. Where some people will see a hill as an obstruction to a view others might see it as giving you a better view. All pretty obvious stuff really but what has that to do with flying or the fear of flying?

I expect that if you and I were in conversation about flying we would have very different viewpoints and use different words to describe the same thing. You are more likely to be emotive and inaccurate whereas I am more likely to be unemotional and highly factual. Not only is this the result of my training as a pilot it is also the way that things really are in commercial aviation.

When I prepare to take off the co-pilot and I go through the checklist, that's a fact... you're more likely to see that as an opportunity for me to forget something. When I take off I will set the power of the engines to what I describe as 'takeoff thrust' you would describe the sound as 'the engines straining'. When I raise the nose to the correct lift off attitude, you might describe it as 'the nose pointing up too far', and so on. Words and the way we use them reflect what we feel ...but unfortunately they also reinforce our thoughts feelings and therefore the way we behave.

Regarding the use of words what about this for as an example? If we wanted to frighten a child who had never flown which description, yours or mine, would be more likely to do that? Furthermore if it is likely to frighten a child, then surely it must have an influence on your feelings. I have had many conversations with people who have a fear of flying, on first meeting them I ask them to describe how they feel about flying. Their descriptions are full of words that I would never dream of using because they're emotional and unfortunately, inaccurate, in other words they don't reflect what really happens in commercial aviation. They reflect how someone is feeling. Overcoming your fear will depend upon being able to challenge your thoughts and beliefs. One of the ways to reinforce and strengthen that process is to write things down. It may seem too simple a thing to do but it has many benefits ...I won't explain them but take my word for it.

Perhaps you should now take a break from this book and sit quietly and describe to yourself, the different things that you have experienced that have made you as fearful as you are and yes it may even be worth writing them down. Look at how you describe things see how many emotive words there are compared with facts and I'm certain you'll see an imbalance.

But this is all very easy for me to say and because I know the facts they had been part of my life for over fifty years, if I were asked to describe other jobs I wouldn't be able to use the correct language and certainly if I were anxious about it I'd probably use emotive language. The thought of being in a submarine is not a pleasant one for me, and I should probably talk about not liking the feeling of being surrounded by water. I'm sure an experienced submariner would smile and say you're not surrounded by water ...you're surrounded by a very strong well-designed metal hull ...and those

accurate and factual words would change my perception of things. I hope that some of the things that I have said is beginning to build your confidence and change some of your perceptions.

Let's review what we've done so far: we started by looking at the kinds of behaviours that people who have a fear of flying tend to display. We've looked at the way we store information in our long-term memory and we've looked at one of the principal reasons, that is to say the media, for feeding our fears. We've briefly considered the effect of the words that we used to describe what we feel. So now it's time to move on to a more practical way of using these theories.

I'll leave you to have a think.



Some ideas from the Psychologists

Earlier I said that there is a psychological school of thought that suggests that we see the world in the way that we describe it. This is called N.L.P. which stands for Neuro Linguistic Programming. N.L.P is not quite as simple as I previously described it. It has many elements, some of which are valuable to someone trying to overcome the fear of flying. If you feel this form of therapy could help you there are many books available to help you. It is sufficient for our purposes to describe simply one or two of its main suggestions. If the words we use to describe the situation cause us anxiety, then we should change the way we describe things.

This will help us put a more rational explanation on the things that we fear, once again I will use the example of plummeting rather than the correct word which is descending. The more you can describe things to yourself in un-emotive language the more confidence you will build within yourself. There is in other interesting theory in N.L.P. It is suggested that you take the fearful situation and change the image that you have in your mind from the big colour version that you see, into a black and white version and then gradually reduced the size of that image until it becomes very small and unrecognisable.

The more you practice this technique the more benefit you will gain from it. There are variations on this theme one of which is to see yourself in a strong position rather than the weak one you perceive yourself to be in. I am not fully familiar with how these techniques should be applied but I understand that during this process as the pictures change you say swish or swoosh so that in future when you say those words you associate them with change. I don't have strong feelings one way or another of its effectiveness. If it works and works on a long term basis then I'm in favour, but it's not a subject that I know enough about to say more than that.

Some therapies are associated with tapping parts of the body. Whether this just distracts your mind or if it really does connect with a meridian in the body, I can't be sure but the fact is that these techniques work for some people. While we are on the subject of images there is a strong case for

another simple form of visualisation. This is usually called “Your peaceful place”. If you can think of somewhere that brings you peace of mind, perhaps somewhere that is special to you. Perhaps something that reminds you of a happy or peaceful time in your life. If you can recall that image, and then are able to close your eyes and imagine yourself to be there, this can be a very powerful technique in controlling your stress levels. I am most definitely in favour of this, because it’s verifiable and simple. If you’re anxious and you can think of somewhere special, and you calm down ...it’s got to be good hasn’t it?

As I said at the very beginning I am not going to include anything that isn’t directly related to overcoming your fear of flying so I shall leave you to investigate these two methods to see if they work for you.

My preference is a therapy called C.B.T. which, as I’m sure you know, stands for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Cognitive behavioural therapy is the process which traces thoughts emotions and behaviours. CBT suggests that what we think causes emotions and the feelings arising from our emotions cause our behaviour. I am more persuaded by this therapy than any other because it is observably true. Here is an example of why I prefer this therapy.

When we’re young meeting a new partner is an exciting time. Our minds are full of happy and confident thoughts and as a result the emotions are displayed by laughter good humour tolerance and sympathy. We know the other side of the coin as well, many of us can remember the sadness at the end of a relationship, perhaps we can recall losing a partner to another person. Let’s remember that for a moment. We know that what ever we think and whatever we want, we cannot change the outcome; we are sad because of our thoughts and feelings. Those thoughts would stop us being the life and soul of the party, rather we would tend to be quiet we would probably lose our appetite and be generally unfriendly. The future would look bleak, and we’d find it painful to socialise. How would you describe red stop/traffic lights when you are late for an appointment or you are with someone new and special and wanting to spend as much time as you can with them?

I cannot think of a clearer example of thoughts and emotions resulting in a particular behaviour. If we have negative thoughts about flying, we will have negative feelings, which will lead to behaviour that reflects those thoughts and feelings. But there a couple of things we can do if we recognise that our behaviour really is the result of thoughts and emotions. If we dispute what we're thinking and ask ourselves "What's the evidence for my thoughts?" we might begin to feel differently. If we feel differently the chances are that we will behave differently. Think of it as ABCD and E.

A is an Activating event

B is the Belief

C is the Consequence

D is for Disputing and

E is the Effect.

For you a fearful flyer it will be like this

A: a bad experience or news item

B: thinking that flying is dangerous

C: avoid flying

D: getting some facts

E: feeling better about flying

Anxiety increases your heart rate, your muscles become tense, your eyes widen and you become hyper-vigilant in other words we become very aware of everything that is going on around us. Those are the classic symptoms of a shot of adrenaline. Now the problem with that, is that an anxious flyer will not see these physiological changes as a result of the thoughts, they will believe them to be in *addition* to the thoughts and therefore think the situation to be worse than it really is. A typical thought pattern might be "I'm not looking forward to this flight because the weather is bad." This will bring on the changes in the body's physiology and then the thoughts go to "I feel sick, I'm breathing quickly I'm going to have a panic attack".

These changes do not *add* to the amount of fear, they are caused by the fear and if you didn't have one you wouldn't have the other, if then you can control the thoughts it's likely that you can avoid the feeling of sickness, the shallowness of breath and the thought of an oncoming panic attack.

As Hamlet said there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so... and there have been many variations of that saying. We know that children can become frightened just by thinking that there is someone under their bed or in the cupboard when the lights go out at bedtime.

We know that it's just a thought but to the child it is a reality. Your reality is a thought also. My reality is built on facts. I hope that many of the things that I have said so far are beginning to change your thoughts into my reality.

So far we have been concentrating on the ways that we think and finding some methods for restructuring our thoughts so that they become positive thoughts leading to positive actions. It may take some time before we can completely remove all the negative thoughts that we have in our long-term memory, but one thing we can do starting today, is to try to stop any more negative thoughts entering our minds. Again like many things in overcoming your fear of flying, this is easier said than done but there are ways, very simple ways to prevent negative thoughts flooding into your head.

One of the things that people tell me is that when they are preparing for a flight is that their negative thoughts start in the night. When they wake their mind is full of negative thoughts that are impossible to control. Once awake, they lay there with the thoughts going round incessantly, then even when they are up getting on with the day the thoughts continue. For some people it is so bad that they feel physically sick and tired throughout the day. Hardly the state of mind and body to fight off more negative thoughts. And as I have said before, these feelings sometimes start even before the tickets are bought and become more intense once they are committed to a flight. Weeks or months of anxiety are going to have an effect on your well being and your resistance levels.

Under these circumstances the best way to start is to allocate a period of the day when you can worry as much as you want to but to promise yourself that you won't worry at other times. Anxious flyers tell me that around four o'clock in the afternoon is probably the best time, and if you are able to contain your thoughts during the day you can look forward to that time when you're allowed to worry. When that is done you can continue practising avoiding the thoughts for the rest of the day.

I suggest a period of approximately 10 minutes when you can sit and enjoy your worries. As you might expect I don't think this is a good habit to get into if things are really bad for you, but this is one way you might be able to take control. Once you have some control, even if it is only about the time *when* you are allowed to worry you can begin to take control over your thoughts. Let's talk about thought stopping while we're here.

There are some very simple methods to stop negative thoughts. A very effective one that fearful flyers have found particularly successful is an elastic band on your wrist and it works like this. Each time you become aware of a negative thought, you pull the elastic band and let it go so that it pings on to your wrist. You will find this fairly painful, but if you stick to the rule that if you begin to think of anything that worries you, that you have to ping the elastic band you'll soon find that your negative thoughts will begin to subside. If you cheat and don't ping the band, you'll still be reminding yourself of how often you think 'bad' thoughts. You will be amazed at the number of unhelpful thoughts you have in a day.

Some psychologists recommend that if these thoughts enter your head then you raise your hand and say "Stop", some people say " Stop I don't need you Go away". Personally I'd find that difficult in public, that's why I recommend the elastic band pinging. There are other methods of thought stopping. And as before I will leave you to find the methods most suitable for you.

At the start of this course I said everything is connected, that nothing was in isolation and that there wasn't a magic formula to get you flying. But there is one thing that you have to do, and this

applies to everyone, you can't miss it out and there's no way around it. You can make it easier for yourself but it's the most important part of overcoming your fear.

What you will have to do, eventually is to *face your fear*. There will be a day when you take a flight, or book a flight, go to the airport or whatever. Nothing can change that fact. This will mean feeling anxious, but feeling anxious will not harm you. A good way of preparing is to re-create the environment which would cause your anxiety levels to increase. You should discover what it feels like to be anxious but at the same time to be in control. Find some soundtracks with which you could imagine being in different stages of the flight...so that you can do this in the security of your home. There are suitable tracks on our website. **Do not** be upset by feeling anxious, it's a perfectly natural thing to happen, what you need to do is to feel the anxiety and get used to it and become aware that it has a limit. Understandably people believe that their anxiety levels will increase to such an extent they will be unable to bear it, but this in fact is not the case. It is good to get used to those things to get the confidence that you will always be in control.

Perhaps while you are listening to the sounds of takeoff you should practise your relaxation, breathing and visualisation techniques. These may seem like silly or insignificant steps but they will all go towards helping you to overcome your fear. Nothing will work in isolation, and as I have said there are many small steps but each one is vital, each one strengthens both next action and the previous ones.

If you think of your fear of flying as a jigsaw puzzle with each piece representing a part of your fear then, before the puzzle is made there are hundreds of pieces all unconnected and unidentifiable some upside down, some the wrong way round ...there is no sensible order in any of it. But when making the picture most people start with the border because every part of the border has a common feature it has a straight edge. Your straight edges in overcoming your fear of flying are avoiding press reports and unhelpful television programmes. The pieces that have the same colour could represent restructuring your thoughts, and so on.

The people whose faces are easily identified in a jigsaw puzzle could represent the facts that have replaced the myths and misunderstanding that you have previously had about flying. Build your flying jigsaw starting with the easy bits and like a real jigsaw your picture of overcoming your fear of flying will build slowly. But as more pieces are laid in position your picture will begin to build more quickly because there are fewer pieces to deal with (call them negative thoughts) and secondly there are fewer spaces for them to get into. In the same way that a jigsaw works so can the process of controlling your thoughts, and overcoming your fear.

Remember that your thoughts are your reality, if you align your thoughts with the facts and then your reality become more like mine so the chances are that your attitude to flying will be closer to mine. But here's an important point; what do you want to achieve? What was your desired outcome? Did you say that you wanted to become an aerobatic pilot ... a wing walker? No you didn't You just want to fly with less anxiety than you do now. So here's another repeat message, keep defining and recalling your outcome clearly. Know what you want to achieve and how you want to feel, and always aim towards reaching that destination. If you define your goal too precisely then you will find it harder to achieve. Be realistic but be challenging. Have a realisable goal. Don't make your jigsaw too big when you can get the same pleasure from a smaller one.

Before we changed tack completely and start talking about aeroplanes and the weather I just want to mention that there will be many times that you will feel vulnerable and out of your comfort zone. Be prepared to accept being in a zone of discomfort because only then will you be making progress. The difference between this zone of discomfort and anything that you felt before is that this one is of your choosing, you choose the discomfort, *you* choose how you want to think, *you* choose the parts of the anxiety that *you* want to face. But even more importantly you'll be more equipped to deal with it.

You have to challenge yourself because overcoming your fear of flying is not easy, it is not quick but it is possible and the chances are that you will do



Misunderstandings

We have spent a while thinking about how we think, and how negative thoughts of flying are easy to collect and store in our long-term memory. We have seen the influence of the media on those thoughts and we have considered some ways of restructuring and dealing with those thoughts. Now that we know what to do and how to do it, we need to know *what* to change.

We are going to look into some of the misunderstandings that people have about flying, and about aeroplanes and the aviation industry in general. Let's start with some of the common myths about flying.

As I am sure you will know by now there are no such things as air pockets, certainly there are occasions when an aeroplane bounces up and down and because we are more sensitive to the feeling of going down rather than going up we get the impression that an aeroplane often drops a long way during turbulence. In fact the average height change of an aeroplane flying in turbulence is less than half the height of an average room. It feels worse because in an aeroplane you're travelling at 600 miles an hour. Imagine the feelings that you would get driving over bumps in the road at 600 miles an hour.

Thunderstorms. Many nervous flyers tell me they have flown through thunderstorms: now unless these people have been on an aeroplane which is researching thunder clouds it is very very unlikely that they have actually flown through a thunderstorm. An airliner is not permitted to fly through storms, we carry weather radar which shows the precise location of the storms and we are required by law to stay at least 25 miles from the centre of them.

However this doesn't mean that the air around them will be calm, because there is quite a lot of turbulence around the area of big storm clouds. Flying in this area may be uncomfortable but it is not the same as flying through the middle of it which is what some nervous fliers often claim. This is understandable particularly at night when lightning is visible even at a considerable distance from a

storm. And in fact if you are in a cloud and there is lightning activity nearby, you will imagine that it is taking place around you because the cloud spreads the light. Just like your car headlights scatter light in foggy conditions.

Another common myth which is likely to worry you, and it certainly worries many other people, is the thought of the doors being opened in flight. This is a physical impossibility because the forces on the door when an aeroplane is airborne are so large that no one could possibly open the door against the pressure inside the cabin. Not even the world's strongest person or a group naughty five year olds could open the door.

Some people believe that the wings could fall off; this isn't true either because in the wings are made as one piece and the cabin built onto it.

Some people worry that the engines might suddenly stop, but the truth is an aeroplane can still fly almost normally (a plane would descend and connect standby systems) when an engine has malfunctioned. Which brings us on to the debate about whether it is safer to fly on an aircraft with four engines or on a two engine aeroplane. There is no real answer to this question because engines malfunction so infrequently that it makes no difference. The reason that planes have a different number of engines is to do with their commercial use.

People often ask me if it would be more comfortable to fly in a big or small aeroplane, once again it depends upon the precise circumstances but in reality it makes no difference, the sensations during turbulence for instance are just different, no worse no better. Think of a small ship and a big cruise ship dealing with waves and currents.

Many people write to me saying that they have to take a flight over the sea and that this makes them nervous. To some extent I suppose this is understandable but in reality if nothing is going to happen to the aeroplane anyway and the aeroplane doesn't know or care whether it's over the sea or the land it doesn't actually make any difference one way or the other. Once again this will be your

perception of things. The danger can be no greater because you are over the sea ...suppose you were asleep and woke to believe that you were overland but were in fact over the sea? What you think doesn't make any difference to reality. It affects how you feel ...change your thoughts and you'll change your feelings. Contrary to most nervous flyers feelings (and hopes) a plane does not have to land immediately if it has a malfunction of any of its equipment because everything has a back up.

What about flying on old aeroplanes rather than new ones? Aeroplanes are not like cars, owners of old cars tend to maintain them less regularly than owners of new cars for obvious reasons. But if the law insisted that all cars were maintained according to the manufacturer's specification throughout its life then I guess there would be fewer breakdowns on old cars. All commercial aircraft *have* to have regular maintenance after every flight, week, month, year. Maintenance has to meet International regulations and standards by Law.

With aeroplanes of course regardless of their age the operators are obliged to maintain the aircraft as if it were new and after certain periods of time in use parts of the equipment on board the aircraft have to be renewed. Personally I would not be influenced by the sorts of aeroplanes that an airline uses on its routes.

Very occasionally people described to me that the aeroplane has missed the runway and had to fly around until it could find the runway again. This is a great but understandably emotive description of something that to me, as a pilot is a very simple thing to do. And that expression 'until it could find the runway again' is a true statement from a fearful flyer. But to me that's like saying you can't find your way home because you're coming from a different direction. I don't expect you to know this of course because flying isn't your subject ...but now that you do ...

Clinging on to old and wrong beliefs will prevent you from overcoming your fear.

The correct description of an aircraft abandoning its approach to land at any stage prior to touch down is a 'Go Around'. The Go Around procedure is very straightforward and very simple. If the

autopilot is flying the aeroplane all the pilot had to do is to press a button or operate a switch. This action will increase the power so that the aircraft can climb, at the same time the nose of the aircraft will be lifted to approximately 15° above the level position. Once the aeroplane is climbing at a certain rate, and that is normally 2000 feet every minute, the power from the engines is reduced again to maintain that rate.

The routing that an aircraft takes after a Go around is usually to climb straight ahead until it is at 3000 feet, and then make a turn back towards the landing runway. Sometimes if this has happened because of bad weather the aircraft will go back into the holding procedure for the runway in use. From your point of view as a passenger of course this will seem alarming because it is unexpected, and there will be no information from the crew until the aircraft has levelled out.

Of course the pilot could speak to tell you what is happening but I'm sure you would prefer that he or she concentrated on flying the aeroplane rather than talking to you and the other passengers. Most airlines now ask the cabin crew, to speak to the passengers as soon as possible to let them know what is happening. Although it is a procedure which is fairly uncommon or common according to your viewpoint, pilots are required to practise this manoeuvre every six months during their competency checks, in the simulator, and are also required to do this with a malfunctioning engine and in 'bad' weather. So when it happens in real life it is very much easier to do than you might expect.

Just in case you are looking forward to a description of turbulence will be doing that a little later on in the section on weather.

Here's something that I have written about in my other book, it concerns the words uncomfortable unexpected and unusual. Just because something is uncomfortable to you that doesn't mean that it is dangerous.

Just because something unexpected happens on your flight, it doesn't mean that it's dangerous either. And of course anything that is unusual to you is probably normal to the pilots, so that doesn't mean that it's dangerous either.

It's quite a good idea to have short statements to say to yourself for reassurance before and during the flight. Leading on from uncomfortable unexpected and unusual it might be a good idea for you to prepare a statement for each of these occasions. It might be "well this is uncomfortable but that's not the same is dangerous"... "Goodness that was unexpected but that's not the same is dangerous". "That was unusual I've never experienced that before, but that's not the same as dangerous."

Anyone who has visited our forum will be familiar with the statement that we encourage people to use when they are feeling anxious during turbulence "Turbulence is uncomfortable but that's not the same as dangerous." Or "I may be worried about turbulence but it's perfectly normal to the pilots."

I think it would be a very good idea if you were to prepare your own short statements for the occasions that you are anxious either when preparing for a flight or when you're on your flight.

Unfortunately it's just not possible for me to explain everything that every fearful flyer may have concerns about. The purpose of this course is to prepare you and inform you sufficiently well so that you will be able to answer your own questions and if you work on the principle that it is very unlikely that you will think of something that has not been thought of already then you are going in the right direction.

Remember too that everything in aviation is designed to improve safety standards. The aviation industry does not stand still in matters of safety. So if something worries you remember that the bottom line is that it has been considered from a safety point of view. Air travel is surprisingly cheap bearing in mind the enormous cost of the aircraft in terms of design and maintenance, and the cost of operating it in a strictly controlled safety environment.

Say to yourself ... “This wouldn’t be allowed if it wasn’t safe”.

To finish in this section I’m going to describe some of the movements and noises on an aeroplane while it is flying. An aeroplane is designed primarily to be efficient when it is cruising at high altitude where the engines and wings are most efficient. When the aircraft is climbing, descending, manoeuvring and changing height or speed the pilots will need to adjust the amount of power from the engines, the pilot will also need to change the lift from the wings as the aircraft slows down by increasing the size of the wings with the flaps which come out at the front and back of the main wings.

The flaps will help the aircraft to slowdown but it also allows the aircraft to fly more safely at a lower speed, which is obviously an advantage for taking off or landing, but it does mean that more engine power is required. As the flaps extend more and more the increases in engine power will become greater until the aeroplane is ready to descend again, when less power is required.

This all means that during the departure but more so during the arrival there will be lots of changes to the aeroplane shape, speed and direction. When the wheels are lowered it slows the plane down so more power is required to maintain the speed. All these movements and sounds are upsetting to a nervous passenger, especially when there may be turbulence around as well. But remember the differences between the movement of the aeroplane caused by turbulence and those brought about by the actions of the pilot. Try to explain to yourself what is going on when the aircraft is manoeuvring for landing. I will describe the take off later.



Movements of the plane and you

When I first became a pilot I was very interested in the medical side of aviation, in particular I was interested in the physiological effects that flying had on the human body. Little did I know that at the end of my career and in retirement that interest would change direction from the effect of flying on pilots to the effect of flying and movements on passengers.

We've seen so far that the fear of flying is very much connected with feelings, thoughts and interpretations, we know also that ignorance and misinformation adds to the mystery and doubts concerning the safety of flying. I have already suggested ways of dealing with your thoughts and this course will also deal with many of the facts of flying. This section describes the feelings that you get when flying, not the emotional ones but the physical ones. Without some knowledge of what happens to us on an aeroplane you will always wonder why you get those funny feelings and sensations when flying.

First we must remember that the human body is built for travelling at approximately 4 miles an hour and in the same direction as we are looking. Most of us can travel a little faster than this when they're running and some athletes of course can travel very quickly. But even the speed of an Olympic champion is nothing compared with the speed of even the slowest aircraft.

So how does speed affect how we feel? Speed itself of course doesn't matter because after all most of us on the planet Earth are travelling at least at 1000 miles an hour as the earth spins and rotates around the sun but of course, because the speed is steady we don't notice it. In an aeroplane the speed changes, during takeoff, it changes from nothing to 180 miles an hour and then gradually during the climb increases to 600 miles an hour.

We only notice the speed when and while it's changing. When the aeroplane speeds up for take off your mind knows that the plane is level, because we know the runway is flat and straight, therefore when we're pushed back into our seats we know that it's the result of going faster, the same feeling we

get in a car. However when we are in cloud and you cannot see anything outside there are two ways that we can be pushed back into our seats, first by going faster or secondly when the pilot raises the nose to climb.

Without being able to see anything outside the aeroplane you cannot tell the difference between these two manoeuvres. The only clue is the time that the engine noise changes, and even so it would require someone very familiar with flying to recognise the differences.

When the plane slows down, just like being in a car, you will have the feeling of being thrown forward, you will get the same feeling in an aeroplane when the nose goes down during the descent, once again the only clue will be the time at which the engines change power.

But of course an aeroplane doesn't just fly in straight lines it has to turn corners and it has also to level out when it has been climbing and also has to level out when it has been descending. By levelling out I mean staying at the same height, the position of the nose and whether it is up level or down is unconnected with whether the plane is staying at the same height. You can be in an aeroplane where the nose is above the level position and yet is descending. Levelling out to you may mean when the wings level after turning, which is also true!

Let's see what happens to our bodies when the aeroplane is in a climb and then goes into level flight. During the climb you are leaning back in your seat and your weight is taken on both your bottom and your back depending upon the steepness of the climb.

When the plane changes from climbing to level flight you will have a feeling of being tipped forward because your weight will come off your back, if the aeroplane slows down at the same time you will once again be thrown forward slightly. There is no way that you can know whether you are being thrown forward because of levelling out or changing speed or even descending unless you have instruments to tell you so.

If the aeroplane has been descending you will be leaning forward slightly, as the aeroplane levels out some of your weight will be transferred to your back as it normally is when you are sitting. But if the aeroplane speeds up at the time that it levels out you will be pushed further back into your seat, and as I said earlier you won't know whether you're being pushed back in your seat because the aeroplane is speeding up or whether it's going into a climb ...and in fact on this occasion it's just flying level.

Perhaps I have exaggerated things slightly and an experienced traveller and a pilot might be able to determine what is happening to the aeroplane because of the stage of flight and other clues but someone new to flying or anxious about flying will find it hard to interpret what is happening.

If you go into a room where a picture is hanging on the wall you can see whether it is straight or not. Even the slightest tilt will show, this is because other clues guide us to what is up and down: one of those clues is gravity. An aeroplane makes its 'own gravity' when it is turning, or levelling off. As a result, our ability to see whether something is tilted or not, is completely lost. You may believe that up is in a particular direction but when you are in an aeroplane in cloud the chances are you will be wrong. Down for you while you're in a plane will always be directly down towards your feet. Think of a fairground ride where you sit in a seat which is suspended on chains which extend upwards to a device which allows the 'seats' to swing outwards. When the operator starts the ride the seats go round and round. Just like a kids merry-go-round. However on the ride I'm describing the seats can swing outwards as the ride speeds up. At the maximum speed of the ride the seats swing out, and usually they gain height too. We think nothing of it. In fact there's no possible way that the seats could not swing outwards ...it would defy the laws of Science. That's what a plane's doing when it turns ... it's going around a great big fairground ride but without the chains, and much higher, and faster, and it's certainly not defying gravity.

When you're in a plane you may believe that one thing is happening but in fact another may be happening and even if you can see out of the window your balancing system will be influenced by the gravity (because the plane is banking) and telling you one thing, and your eyes will be telling you

another. This disorientation is something that pilots experience very early in their careers, for an anxious passenger it can be very very unsettling. And of course if you feel unsettled you will feel uneasy and ...you will consider that there is an element of danger.

Let's see why this happens to you while the aeroplane is turning. If you can remember your school biology you might recall that in our ears there are balancing mechanisms. They are like three spirit level set at 90° to each other. They detect the following movements, nodding, turning your head from side to side and moving your head sideways from shoulder to shoulder. These detectors are tubes that have very sensitive hairs in them, the tubes contain fluid. As our head moves so were fluid swishes one way or another and the sensitive hairs tell our brain which way our head has moved.

But as I have said, the aeroplane makes its own gravity when it in a steady turn. The fluid in our ears swishes as the aeroplane starts the turn, after twenty-seconds or so they return to what they think is the level position (because of the 'plane's gravity'). The true level position will be different from the one that you are feeling. This means that you will not and cannot know whether a plane is in a turn or level unless your eyes can see outside the aircraft. And if you can see outside you will still feel level even if the plane is turning.

Perhaps all this sounds unnecessarily complicated even though I have tried to make it as simple as possible. But it is an important thing to know about and even if you can't remember everything I said at least you'll know that when you are feeling unbalanced or disorientated in an aeroplane there are very good reasons for it. And you can't do anything about it either.

If only it were as simple as that, but there's something else to consider too. A feeling that is very similar to going up or down in a lift. As you know when you get in a lift to go up, as it starts to move you will feel the floor pushing up against you in this makes you feel slightly heavier than normal, and as the lift slows down you feel slightly lighter, the reason for feeling slightly lighter as the lift begins to slow is that you continue to go up while the lift is gradually slowing down. If you get the chance takes

some bathroom scales into a lift and watch your weight change as the lift goes up and down, very interesting but what has this to do with aeroplanes?

When an aeroplane has been climbing and goes into level flight it is like a lift slowing down after going up, you will feel as if you are leaving your seat slightly. Now the extraordinary thing about this is that even though you are going up the feeling of lightness will make you feel as if you are going down.

I suppose to prove this I should encourage you to take a kitchen chair into a lift but I think you will attract enough attention already with just the bathroom scales. Maybe you should just take my word for it.

A simple way of seeing how our bodies are confused by movement is this small experiment. If you have a car which is fitted with Cruise Control find a road which after a level stretch goes up a hill, set the speed and close your eyes. As the car maintains speed while it goes up the hill you will be convinced that the car is going faster and similarly after a steady speed if the car goes down a hill you will think that the car has slowed down. Perhaps I should have said earlier that you should get someone to drive the car for you and you should be the passenger. Anyway it's all to do with which way you're tipping.

That's enough about the movements of aeroplanes and its effect on your body. However there are other important physiological things that occur on an aeroplane that are important for you to know. The first thing is that the effects of alcohol or caffeine are greatly increased with the reduced pressure in the aircraft cabin. Secondly, because the air-conditioning and moisture content of the air in an aircraft is much lower than we are normally used to, you will need to drink water to prevent dehydration. It's good to avoid alcohol because one drink in the plane is like consuming three drinks at sea level.

When you cross time zones of more than five hours or so you will require at least a day to acclimatise to the local time. When you cross time zones your sleep patterns will be severely

disrupted. On long flights meals will sometimes be served at times when your body is neither expecting nor needing food. All these factors will take a toll on your well-being and your ability to resist stress. At these times you will need to use your relaxation, breathing and visualisation techniques to maintain a positive frame of mind.

These effects are subtle and you will probably be inclined to put them down as general tiredness. However these are important physiological symptoms and you should pay attention to them because a fit mind and a fit body will help you to use all your strategies most effectively.



Flying

Armed now with your strategies and techniques, we can address our thoughts to the actual business of flying. As I have said, for many fearful flyers the problems do not start when they are getting on the aeroplane, anxieties start further back than even booking a ticket.

Anxious flyers can begin to worry about their forthcoming flight as much as two or three years ahead of the actual flight. The wedding and honeymoon plans of a couple are often influenced by the fear of flying. It is not unusual to hear of a honeymoon being cancelled because on the day, one of the couple couldn't actually face the flight.

For friends travelling together it's not uncommon for me to hear that one has had to stay behind and suffer terrible feeling of guilt for spoiling the holiday for other people. If I were to pick out one feature that strikes me as being particularly sad it is the guilt that fearful flyers suffer because of the effect it has on other people's lives. So many people write to me and say that they need help because every year they spoil the family holiday. For many of you I know that getting on a flight to your holiday destination may seem as if you had overcome your fear, but for *you* the thought of the return flight spoils the holiday. The problem of flying home is much bigger than the problem of going in the first place. There are good reasons for this that we don't need to discuss here. This is quite hard for other people to understand because "You've managed to fly here ...what's the difference?" However you shouldn't feel guilty or responsible for the happiness of others ...it's a burden you can do without until you're flying regularly. However it's worth knowing that it might influence the behaviour of your children.

Extraordinarily some people gain an advantage from the attention they receive when advertising their fears. These are called secondary gains and when the fear is acute it can, as one person said to me define both their life and their personality. For people like this, the solution is even worse than the fear. However I digress I was going to talk about the actual business of flying.

Now that mankind has been flying for over a hundred years I think we can dispense with the remark ‘the miracle of flight’. It is not a miracle, it may seem like a miracle to you but it’s not. It is a fact of physics, mathematics, engineering and science and that is that. No one helps the cause of anxious flyers if we marvel at *why* aeroplanes fly, certainly marvel at how they can enhance our lives, be overwhelmed by the amazing views that they provide us with, and be grateful that they bring loved ones together. There’s no need to be more impressed by a plane flying than by a boat floating. They are a matter of physics, mathematics, engineering and science.

Aeroplanes don’t defy the laws of gravity otherwise it wouldn’t be a law it would be a scientific oddity that is true one-day and untrue on another. Aeroplanes fly because they have wings, an aeroplane doesn’t care how heavy it is as long as its wings can make a big enough lifting force to support it. The comparison I like most of all is that a brick is lighter than a jumbo jet but it doesn’t fly nearly so well. If you don’t believe me get hold of a brick throw it and ask yourself why it didn’t fly.

It didn’t fly because it hasn’t got wings. Put wings of the right shape and size on it and if you could throw it, it would fly. Sure it wouldn’t stay airborne until it had an engine fitted, then neither does glider but we would agree that a glider flies.

And if you wonder how a helicopter flies ... it has rotating wings. Balloons? Well, balloons don’t really fly any more than a dandelion seed being blown along by the wind does, but as long as something is up in the sky and moving we call it flying.

Anyway if a brick has wings and an engine and it flies ...it’s become an aeroplane. If it’s big enough to carry a pilot and passengers it’s still an aeroplane even though it looks like a brick with wings and an engine. The problem is persuading people that flying is normal, but unfortunately any question about flying machines usually starts with the question *how* which implies doubt. We often say How (on earth) ...meaning I don’t really believe it. I would rather ask the question *why* does an aeroplane fly? That sounds factual and flying is factual. Okay *why* does an aeroplane fly?

An aeroplane flies because when it travels through air, a suction develops on the top of the wing that is sufficient to hold it up. But not only is there suction on the top of the wing, the shape of the wing also causes an enormous cushion of air under the wing which helps to support the plane. And if you don't believe that, ask yourself how a hydrofoil on a boat works. And isn't it a coincidence that a wing shape is called an Aerofoil ...aero meaning air, and the thing on a boat is called a hydrofoil, hydro meaning liquid.

Why are we happy that a hydrofoil works without questioning it, but hard to believe that an Aerofoil, (a wing), needs magic or blind faith? I'll tell you the reason, and that is that seeing is believing, you can see the water but you can't see air and that's the problem.

However if you could stick your head out of an aeroplane doing 600 miles an hour you'd soon find out that air feels thicker than water. But you know this already because every one of us has dealt the force of the air when we have stuck our arms or heads out of a car or train window. Try cycling into a strong headwind and you'll discover how thick the air can feel. And just one more illustration of how powerful the air can be and that is to ask you to recall any occasion when you have tried to carry a large flat object on a windy day, or an umbrella perhaps?

An aeroplane doesn't need the wind to make it fly, it creates its own wind, (as a pilot I call it airflow), when the engines pull or push it through the air. So now you know how an aeroplane flies, whoops sorry, *why* an aeroplane flies. An aeroplane is controlled by changing the amount of lift on the wings or the tailplane ...that's the small wing at the back. The rudder is the bit that sticks up at the back and works in the same way that the keel works on a boat. The speed of an aeroplane is controlled either by pointing the nose up or down and/or by changing the power from the engines.

Maybe the easiest way to describe aeroplanes and flying is to take you through a typical flight and point out the things of interest to you as I go along.

The Flight

A typical passenger flight from the pilot's point of view would be like this. I would report for work an hour or two before departure depending upon the destination. I meet my fellow crew members and go through a thorough flight briefing from the flight dispatcher. The cabin crew will brief themselves about their passengers and service and safety features while the copilot and I will check the facilities on route, the weather and the serviceability and maintenance record of the aircraft we are using. Forty five minutes before takeoff we will arrive at the aircraft and while the cabin crew check the aircraft safety equipment and the catering supplies I will check the outside condition of the of the aircraft.

The copilot meanwhile will be checking and setting the cockpit for the departure. He or she will contact Air Traffic Control for departure clearance which will give us the routing from the departure airfield and where to join the main route to our destination. From an engineering point of view we are not allowed to accept an aircraft for flight unless it conforms with all the maintenance rules. The engineer will certify that the aircraft is serviceable and that the correct amount of fuel has been loaded. This is crosschecked against the request that I have made using all the information the flight dispatcher has given me when preparing the departure documents. All this information is recorded in the aircraft's Technical Log. With these crosschecks confirmed it is impossible to take off without knowing the correct weight of the aircraft with everything and everyone on board.

We will know, but always confirm that the runway we intend to use for take off is long enough for our take off weight. In reality not only would it be long enough for us to take off from it will also be long enough for us to stop on in the unlikely event of any malfunction. Regardless of how the take off seems to you ...you can be certain that everything about the take off has been confirmed and checked, that all the calculations have been made and confirmed ensuring that the take off is both legal and safe.

There are many key moments when the anxiety levels of fearful fliers increase. Looking at holiday brochures, booking tickets, going to the airport, boarding and so on. But for many people it really

kicks in when the engines start, this is one of the moments where the decision is being taken out of your hands, after the engines start you think it will be very difficult to get off. Once again you will become hyper-vigilant and you will notice everything that is happening. It is important at this stage to know what is happening so that you can minimise your anxiety. This is a good time to use your breathing and muscle relaxation strategies. By the way you could get off at any point up until the plane starts its take off roll.

Before the engines start we have to turn off the air-conditioning ... so the background noise will suddenly stop to be immediately replaced with the whine as the engines start. The lights go on and off, pumps begin to run, the air-conditioning goes on and off all sorts of unusual and unexpected things happen. Remind yourself that unusual and unexpected are not the same as dangerous. The reason that the lights go on and off is that as the electrical services are changed from the ground power to the engines there is a moment when the electricity supply is interrupted. When the aeroplane has its own electricity supply from the engines then all the other bits and pieces can be turned on and it is these things that cause the noises. Certainly nothing to be anxious of and if you expect it, then you will not feel your stress levels increasing. By the way a noise is a sound you can't identify and a sound is a noise that you can identify.

Once the engines are started the aircraft will be allowed to be pushed into position on the taxiway. During the push back you may feel the aircraft being jolted, this is all perfectly normal. Once freed from the push back tractor the aircraft can taxi to the take off point. During this phase once again you will hear unfamiliar noises as the flaps are set for take off and as the wheels run over the lights which illuminate the centre line of the taxiway. There may be a queue of the aircraft ahead of you getting ready to take off. These delays are not because there is something wrong with the aeroplane, or that the runway is too busy or that air traffic control don't know what's going on or anything sinister like that. It's like waiting at the traffic lights. When it's your turn to go you can go but not until air traffic control say that you can. Before takeoff use your strategies to stay calm and relaxed.

I hope by this stage of the 'flight' you will be busily reading your magazines or one of my books and that you will be so engrossed in it that you won't even notice what's going on around you.

Now a word about your anxiety during the take off. Many people worry that the runway won't be long enough to get up to speed or that it would be too short to stop on if we had to stop. Despite what you feel and think, the plane will be able to take off safely. Many people think that the engines are straining but the truth is that we probably are using only 90 to 95% of the plane's actual engine power... there's always plenty in hand. Ask yourself why on earth a manufacturer would build a plane that had insufficient power to take off without the engines straining? Many people, understandably don't like the noise during the take off. The reason that there is so much noise is that the soundproofing is designed to be most efficient at the cruising speed of 600 miles an hour, not at the speeds on the runway. And when you're travelling at 600 miles an hour the noise is being left behind, at the start of the take off you are surrounded by the noise of the engines.

And what about the bumpy runway? The runway is designed with ridges and grooves in it to disperse water and this makes a lot of tyre noise. The wheels and shock absorbers are designed to transfer the weight of the aircraft from the wings to the wheels at 150 miles an hour when it is landing. This means that the springs and shock absorbers are very stiff which does not make the ride very comfortable during takeoff. But uncomfortable is not the same as dangerous is it?

In the cockpit of a modern aircraft the pilots just have to press a button/switch for the onboard computers to calculate exactly how much power the engines should produce for that particular take off. In the very very unlikely event of an engine malfunction, after a certain speed the runway will still be long enough for the aeroplane to take off and climb away safely.

Of course, if there is an engine malfunction before this speed then the runway will be long enough for the aeroplane to be able to stop. This is not a matter of guesswork or experience, it is calculated to the nearest one and a half miles per hour when the pilots know how heavy the aircraft is and which runway is in use.

If you are sitting in front of the engines it will be less noisy than if you are sitting behind them. Probably the best place for an anxious passenger to sit is over the wings because in that position you are in effect over the middle point of a seesaw and the movements of the aircraft will be less exaggerated in that position.

As you know when the aircraft is taxiing to the runway you'll hear the noise of the flaps travelling into position. After the aircraft has been climbing for a minute or so, and as the speed increases the flaps will gradually be retracted. If you can see the wings and if you are looking out of the window when this is happening you will see the panels at the front or the back of the wings folding back into the wings as the plane gathers speed.

After takeoff the aircraft will probably level off at 6000 feet, (UK). This is the point when many anxious passengers tell me that they feel as if they are falling. As I have explained earlier what you feel is not necessarily what is going on. The sudden reduction in sound as the engine power is reduced and the feeling of falling as the plane goes from being nose up in the air to level will give you a distinct feeling of going down. At this point you have to say to yourself "Although I feel as if the aeroplane is going down ...I know it isn't." This restriction is to allow incoming aircraft to descend to 7000 feet without interfering with outbound aircraft.

Just one more thing before we finish with the take off, some people say to me that they think it is possible for the plane to flip over when the nose goes up. They think that it is possible for the nose to keep going up and up and up, this is just not possible so please do not worry about this anymore if you have worried about it previously. It is no more possible than a car going round and round in circles just because you've turned left or right.

An aeroplane is most likely to be in cloud during the climb up to its cruising altitude. This means that where the changes of direction and speed are occurring is when you can't see out of the window. Don't let the sensations that you feel at this time worry you unnecessarily, I have already

explained why you get these sensations. Just be prepared for them during the first part of the climb and during the last 10 minutes or so of the flight.

As you climb up through the clouds you're likely to feel some slight turbulence. The bumps occur when your aircraft flies through air that is going up as it forms the clouds or down as the clouds disperse. Remember to have your seatbelt fastened as tightly as you can bear it to reduce the feeling of being bumped around. Remember though, the seat belt doesn't hold your tummy in place so you'll still get some feelings of going up and down.

With modern air traffic control systems your climb to the cruising height will probably be uninterrupted. If it is necessary for Air Traffic Control to restrict your climb you will hear the engine power reduce and then increase again as the aircraft is cleared to continue climbing. Sometimes people ask me why the engine noise will suddenly increase when they had been flying along for a few hours without any thing happening. Why has it suddenly become necessary to change the engine power? The reason for this is quite simple and it is because as the plane uses fuel it becomes lighter which means that the aeroplane can climb higher, and this is beneficial in terms of higher speed and lower fuel consumption.

Perhaps you are asking yourself why I haven't spoken about turbulence yet. The reason is that turbulence doesn't play a prominent part in a pilot's life. It is just part of the flight that may or may not occur and there are no special things that we have to do because of it. If you were going on a cruise ship and you met the Captain I don't suppose you'd ask him/her if "there are any waves or tides today?"

During our pre-flight briefing we will have checked for areas of turbulence and of course where possible we would plan a route to avoid it. Weather maps predict exactly where these areas are and the times that turbulence is likely to be present. I'm sure you remember that we never flight closer than 25 miles to any storm clouds, and modern weather radar equipment will show exactly where the storms are. It is very easy to navigate around them. When in an area of turbulence the captain is

obliged to put on the seatbelt signs and you are obliged to put your seat belt on. You should tighten them as much as you can bear so that you move at the same time as the aeroplane rather than moments afterwards which will always make the turbulence seem worse. The reason that the seat belt signs go on more often today than they did years ago comes under the legal heading of ‘Duty of care’.

A racing car driver is strapped into his/her car so tightly that only his/her arms and feet can move, nowadays even head movement is prevented by head restraints. This, surprisingly enough is designed for safety and comfort. The same thing applies to you when you are strapped in tightly, safety and comfort. For the pilots during turbulence we reduce speed to give the passengers the most comfortable ride possible and apart from putting on the seat belt signs that’s all we have to do. It is not harder to fly a plane during turbulence anymore than it is more difficult for you to drive over bumpy road compared with a smooth road. You have no reason to be concerned about flying in turbulence despite what you think and what you feel.

Remember as long as you are strapped in tightly you just have to tell yourself that “Turbulence is uncomfortable but that’s not the same as dangerous.” Regard it as an inconvenience rather than a threat.

There are extensive descriptions of turbulence both in my book *Fly without Fear* and on my website so I won’t go into it again here. Just joking, I know how worrying turbulence can be for you and because it is such an important subject I will repeat some of that information here. However I will repeat once more that the aeroplane is perfectly safe despite how you feel.

Maybe I should introduce the subject in the way that I would if I were flying. “Hello Ladies and gentlemen this is the Captain. We’re just approaching an area of turbulence so I would like you to return to your seats and fasten your seat belts, reports from other aircraft say that the turbulence will last for 15 minutes, when we are clear I shall turn off the seatbelt signs again. May I reassure you that although you might find turbulence uncomfortable it presents no problems at all to the aircraft or how we fly it.”

When you hear this announcement don't become tense, practise your relaxation and breathing exercises and tighten your seatbelt as much as you can. Say to yourself that, "Turbulence is uncomfortable but that's not the same as dangerous".

The fact that turbulence is caused by moving air is fairly obvious, but how does it move in the first place? Let's go from basic principles: It is hotter at the equator than at the North and South Poles because the sun's heating effect is greater at the equator than at the poles. You know that when you are sunbathing it's better to enjoy the midday sun than the very early morning or evening sun and this is because at midday the sun's rays hit you directly while in the evening they strike you as a very small angle. At the North and South Poles the sun strikes the planet Earth at such a shallow angle that very little heating is caused. At the equator, the sun strikes the ground from directly above for most of the day. This heats the ground, the ground heats the air and the warm air rises. This air is replaced from the poles north or southwards towards the equator. It's slightly more complicated than that but that's sufficient for this explanation I hope.

Any air over the land is heated more than the air over the sea. This means, that generally speaking, the air over Europe or Africa or America will rise, and be replaced by the air that was previously over the sea. These two circulations, one North South and the other East and West across the planet end up colliding, and just like two rivers meeting, ripples and waves are caused. But unlike rivers and tides, air is invisible so you can't see what's happening.

Well if only it were as simple as that. Imagine a town in the country. What happens when the sun beats down upon the town? It heats all the buildings and cars and so on but, it doesn't heat the fields surrounding the town. Because the fields don't heat up as quickly as the town, the hot air over the town rises and is replaced by the cooler air that has been over the fields, this will be another source of turbulence because if you are flying along and the bubble of warmer air rises from the town you will feel it as a bump. When that air has finished rising it will have to come down again and you would feel that as another bump. So there will be ups and downs when there are summer clouds in the sky!

Another cause of turbulence is when the wind strikes objects on the ground such as trees, towns and mountains. When this happens the air rises on one side and then follows the shape of the ground and descends on the other side as we know with streams and rivers, when the water flow hits an obstruction the water doesn't flow continuously and smoothly, it forms ripples and currents and eddies and this is exactly what happens to the wind. And you will feel this as bumps and movements of the aeroplane.

However uncomfortable you feel, as long as you are strapped in securely you will come to no harm in turbulence. During turbulence keep pulling your lap strap as tightly as you can bear it. The Press make a great fuss about clear air turbulence. But then they make a great deal of fuss about a lot of things. Clear air turbulence or CAT is a specific description for turbulence and is caused at a medium to high altitude but does not produce cloud. You may find someone to make more of it than that, but that's all it really is.

I keep thinking that you won't be satisfied unless I cover everything I know and all that you have heard about turbulence but really and truly there are very few variations in how turbulence is caused. What I have just described are the main causes. What is most important for you to remember is to say to yourself that "Turbulence is uncomfortable but that's not the same as dangerous." And if you wonder what causes turbulence say to yourself it's because the heating is 'greater at the equator' and that should be enough unless you want to go into a career in meteorology. Back to our flight...

Once we are at the cruising height the pilots will be monitoring and implementing Air Traffic Control instructions for the route, they will be checking the weather and fuel consumption, and monitoring the aircraft systems. The computers that perform many of these functions cannot be compared to your home PC. The demands on aircraft computers are far less than anything a personal computer has to do. And because they are duplicated and sometimes triplicated, if there is a fault on one it does not affect the aircraft at all. Everything in the cockpit, every system on board has at least one two or three backup systems depending upon its importance. Like you there are periods in the

flight when we relax. Not in quite the same way as you but we make sure to share the workload so that no-one gets too busy or too relaxed.

Before I describe what happens during the descent approach and landing this might be a good time to learn something about breathing and relaxation techniques in case you become anxious during the flight. Remember that before your flight you should have rested well, prepared everything in advance, found something to entertain yourself with during the flight, informed yourself about the facts of flying and dispelled all those myths that used to worry you, eaten well and drunk enough water to stay hydrated. If you have done all those things the benefits of breathing properly and relaxing properly will be considerable.

Here are a couple of Relaxation exercises I recommend.

Muscle Relaxation Exercise

1. Squeeze your toes
2. Tighten your calf muscles
3. Tighten your thigh muscles
4. Tighten your stomach muscles
5. Tighten your shoulder muscles
6. Tighten your neck muscles
7. Tighten your arm muscles
8. Hold everything in tension for a few seconds
9. Relax from your neck down towards and including your toes
10. Repeat

Breathing Exercise

1. Inhale for a count of Five
2. Hold your breath for a count of Two

3. Exhale for a count of Seven

4. Repeat

Visualisation exercise

This is about closing your eyes, relaxing thinking of a peaceful place which makes you feel calm and quiet. There is a lot of information on the internet to help you with visualisations and I suggest that you research there to find the method that works most effectively for you.

You should arrange to do your breathing exercise when you are most stressed. Imagine that take off worries you ... do your muscle relaxation as you taxi out and do your breathing routine during the take off. If boarding worries you, do your muscle relaxation while you're sitting in the Departure Lounge and your breathing exercise as you board. Save your visualisation as a reward for overcoming your anxiety immediately after the stressful part of your flight.

Back to your flight

While you've been doing your breathing and muscle relaxation the copilot and I have been navigating towards our destination. Once we settle at our cruising height the flight navigation equipment follows the prescribed route and takes us safely to our destination. I doubt whether you would want us to trust in this equipment without checking it and that's exactly what we do. Throughout the flight we monitor what the flight computer suggests and make adjustments if necessary. During the cruise we check the weather at suitable airfields that we might need to use as a diversion. I know that many fearful fliers think that when they fly over the sea that it would not be possible to make an emergency landing very quickly.

However an emergency to a fearful passenger is not what I would call an emergency, I would call it a non-normal procedure. If something happens during a flight that requires me to make a landing

then that's all there is to it, it's not an emergency as such, it's just that I'm doing something that I hadn't previously planned for.

If an engine were to malfunction while I am over the sea contrary to what you might think I don't have to make a landing straightaway the aeroplane is perfectly capable of flying to its destination on the remaining engines. So from my point of view it doesn't matter if there is an airfield underneath or near me or not I shall probably continue to the destination anyway. A two engined plane would land at a nearby suitable airfield. A two engine plane flying over the sea has to be within a certain flying time of a suitable airport at which to land. And of course when the flight departs the weather at these airports has to be forecast to be very good at the estimated time of landing there. Only then can we nominate it as an en-route diversion airport.

The media exaggerate the problems and risks unnecessarily with regard to aeroplanes flying over the sea. Remember that modern air travel is very different from the air travel of just a few years ago. The advances in aircraft reliability, design and safety are far far greater than the developments of any other transport system. Air travel is the safest form of transport.

What else am I doing during the cruise? I am staying in touch with the cabin crew about the welfare of the passengers and constantly checking the weather and I am always in contact with the air traffic control who are supervising the flight. As we approach our destination the copilot and I will discuss the landing procedure and programme the computers for the expected arrival. We discuss and agree the different heights to which we can go down as we leave our cruising height and descend towards the runway. During the descent sometimes air traffic control asks us to increase the speed at which we are descending, this means that we might have to use the speed brakes. The speed brakes are large panels that come out on the top surface of the wing to disrupt the smooth air passing over the wings, this causes the lift to be reduced and the aircraft will descend more quickly. When we use the speed brakes the aircraft will vibrate much more than it does usually because of the disrupted air flow over the top of the wing. This is perfectly normal.

As we get lower and lower we have to use the flaps and put the wheels down, both these things will slow the aeroplane down which we have to counteract by increasing the engine power. To a nervous flyer all these noises and movements will be unsettling and unexpected. When this is happening on your flight, describe to yourself in un- emotive language what is happening and why it is happening. If you do become anxious use your relaxation techniques.

Once again I have to use the expression ‘despite what you think’, and despite what you think flying a modern jet airliner is not a difficult or demanding task, it certainly requires special skills but not special people to perform them. It is after all just a job, it’s a very privileged and very specialised job, but it is still just a job and the people doing it do all the things that other people do when they finish their jobs. They will go home greet the family feed the dog, fix the tap, cut the grass and watch the television. There are no supermen or superwomen flying aeroplanes.

This is an important thing to remember because if you believe that only ‘super’ people can fly aeroplanes you might think it’s because that flying is difficult or dangerous. This is simply not true. Many people that I have taken on a flight simulator are amazed to see how quickly and easily they can learn to control a passenger aircraft.

I often hear reports from nervous passengers that the landing was bumpy or that the plane was too fast or landed too far along the runway or braked too hard or nearly missed the taxiway or got lost, or nearly landed on another aircraft or an aeroplane was landing too closely behind them and many, many other exaggerated claims about the landing. All these things are possible, because anything is possible, but it is highly improbable, it is impossible to know any of these things without having been in the cockpit at the time. These are perceptions that people have when they are in a hyper-vigilant state and being driven by anxiety. It is no more likely that a pilot would do these things than it would be for you to drive the on the wrong side of the road all the way to your local shops.

And don't forget that it's not just one person flying the plane, the co-pilot and captain will be supervising the actions of the other, against a set of procedures, so what are the chances of something being done incorrectly without one of them noticing?

Let me tell you how we land a jet aeroplane. We have equipment on board which will show us exactly the height that we should be at certain distances from the runway. The same equipment shows us whether we are in line with the runway, which of course we may not be able to see because of cloud or fog. Not only does that equipment show us whether we are in line or not and that it will also tell us how to get back to the correct height and alignment.

We control the speed with the throttles just as you do in a car except that the throttles are operated by hand. A lever with 4 or 5 positions allows us to set the flaps as we need them when we slow down. Remember that as we set the flaps although they allow us to fly slowly they also disturb the air flow around the plane which you will feel as a vibration in the cabin. The same will happen in the cabin when I put the wheels down.

With the speed set correctly and with my instruments showing me where I am in relation to the runway I wait until I am at 50 feet above the runway where I raise the nose very slightly, then I close the throttles, keep the nose in the same position and let the aeroplane sink onto the runway. If the runway is wet I will allow the aircraft to touch down more firmly to squeeze the water out of the tyres so that they grip the runway and I can brake without skidding. Once on the ground I increase the braking effect with the engines by selecting reverse thrust, this sends the air from the back of the engine forward, instead of backwards, so that it helps the aircraft to slow down. The airbrakes will deploy fully and automatically a few moments after touchdown. When I have slowed to 70 miles an hour I can turn off the runway and taxi to the parking gate. On the way to the gate once again you will hear noises of the flaps going back into position and air conditioning noises. Sometimes one of the engines are stopped during the taxi and it's possible that you will see the lights going on and off as the electrical supplies change as they did on startup. When I've turned everything off I sign the Technical Log go to the car park and drive home. To me that's the dangerous part of the day's work.

That's the end of this short description of a flight which I hope has given you an insight to some of the things we do and how normal it all is. Time to look at some more things that you can do to overcome your fear of flying.



Fear of Flying Courses

The choice of which fear of flying course to do must be very confusing to anyone looking for help. I have always been doubtful with regard to so-called miracle cures, in fact there are NO miracle cures. Advertisements that can cure anything from nail-biting to the fear of flying whilst doubling your income and giving you a perfect body shape shows that there is a market for people who are desperate to overcome their fear and are willing to do almost anything to change their lives.

Overcoming a fear of flying takes time, patience and commitment. Claims that it can be done easily are, in my opinion fraudulent. Some people do it in less time than others of course, but it's not a race to the finishing line. It is more important to finish than being first there. Please be easy on yourself. You are seeking long term success, not a quick fix. A balanced diet not fast food. A symphony not a jingle.

Well-trained and competent therapists will of course be more effective in a shorter space of time than less capable ones.

I have already said that the use of words, gathering facts, visualisations, relaxation and breathing techniques are important parts of overcoming your fear of flying. These are demonstrably effective things to do. However many 'fixes' involve transfer, either to the therapist or to thoughts away from flying. The body tapping techniques of EFT or the persuasive encouragement of a personal trainer or hypnotist all have an ingredient of transfer. They suggest that we can, through these techniques take our thoughts away from the negative and make them positive and enjoy a personal benefit.

My view is much simpler, it's your fear ...you fix it and then you'll own it.

What the fear of flying course should do is to treat you as an individual and deal with your particular fear and worries. It's a much more lasting fix to understand why a plane is safe flying on one engine rather than to think of the colour pink (or whatever thought or thoughts the therapist

thinks you should have) to counter what you're experiencing. After you understand things sure, think of the colour pink or a field of cows or a sunset. You can't pass an examination by thinking nice thoughts. You need to know how to answer the questions!

Thinking of something else just takes your mind off your worries, it doesn't remove the worry. It certainly won't remove them in the long run. It really is all in the mind, because I believe that most of us have the strength to overcome our fears but we need knowledge, mental processes, strategies and support to make it happen and to enjoy long term success.

There is no magic, there doesn't need to be magic, most people have enough personal strength and confidence to achieve whatever they want. With fear it is just a question of unlocking a particular mindset. Simple accurate explanations and examples about fearful situations help to 'normalise' things and improve understanding. Albert Einstein said that when we explain something we should make it as simple as possible but no simpler, and things are made much easier to understand if they are described to us in ways that are connected with things that we already understand.

Why in reality is it not quite that simple? Like using a computer if you put 'garbage in' you'll get 'garbage out'. And it's the same with our minds and the fear of flying, unless we put the right thoughts in (Facts) we'll get the wrong stuff (Feelings) out and as CBT suggests, you'll behave in a way that means that you won't want to go flying.

How can I help you to implant into your mind the right sorts of thoughts? Well I have tried to do that by giving you factual information and by using un-emotive language. Because this is the way that you can build enough knowledge and confidence for you to answer your own questions and address your fears as you perceive them.

I have said already that everything in aviation is done to achieve maximum safety and this is your bottom line too. If you can't understand something or are still fearful about something you have to remind yourself that it wouldn't be done if it wasn't safe. ***Safety is our bottom line.***

Everything we do in commercial aviation is driven by safety and improving safety standards. The best way to feel safe is to understand why something is being done, the more knowledge you have, and the more widely you can apply that knowledge the more secure you will feel. This security will make you feel confident, and it is confidence, in addition to everything else, which will help you to fight off your anxieties.

As I keep saying this is easier said than done. You have a whole mountain of worries fears anxieties that prevent you, or at least make it more difficult for you, to apply what in reality are very simple things. What is it that lets those nagging doubts enter our heads and corrupt everything we try to do? One theory talks about a 'distorted thinking' and it's one which I feel has very great strength.

When I was a pilot in British Airways, one of the many things my training taught me was that, for example, when flying in turbulence I should set the speed to 290 knots and put the seatbelt signs on. I did precisely that without question. I'm a pilot I know the procedures are safe, so I do it. That's the tried and tested procedure, I'm paid to do, so I do it. But how might an anxious flyer interpret Turbulence?

First let me run through the ten accepted types of 'twisted' thinking first before applying them to what I have just said.

1. All or nothing thinking, everything is 100% or nothing
2. Generalising, if it happens now, it will always happen
3. Choosing, the negative, and ignoring anything positive
4. If there is a positive it doesn't count
5. Unfounded conclusions: Assuming negativity without evidence, predictions of negative outcomes
6. Making things bigger than they really are or less important according to what is convenient to you
7. Emotional reasoning, drawing factual conclusions from emotional feelings for example I feel guilty therefore I am guilty, this is stupid therefore I am stupid

8. Being too strict with yourself, I *should* do this, I *should* do that, I *ought* to be able, I *have* to
9. Labelling, identifying yourself with your weaknesses. Instead of saying I got it wrong you say something like I'm a loser
10. Personalisation and blame, you hold yourself responsible you even blame yourself for something you're not entirely responsible for, sometimes you even blame other people and overlook the fact that what you do and think may well contribute to your anxiety.

So let's see if any of those things could apply to the simple statements that I made about turbulence, it won't necessarily be entirely accurate or totally representative of what you might think, this is just to see if those twisted thinking rules could apply.

Number one: all or nothing thinking would change turbulence into a *death-defying* experience

Number two: would change turbulence from an occasional experience to it's *always* turbulent

Number three: choosing negative information is making turbulence *dangerous*

Number four: changes the fact that there was no turbulence on the last flight into meaning there's *more chance* of it on this flight

Number five: making predictions, if there is turbulence *it's going to be horrendous*

Number six: turbulence is *very dangerous* for an aeroplane

Number seven: I'm the only *idiot that worries* about turbulence

Number eight: I *should* be able to fly in turbulence without worrying about it

Number nine: I'll never get over this, *I'll always worry* about turbulence

Number ten: The pilot said there'd be no turbulence he lied to me. *I wouldn't have come if I'd known that.*

Interestingly in one way or another those examples have summed up almost everything I have ever heard about the way people deal with the fear of flying. Without knowing it I have been persuading people not to do those things because many of their thoughts have been factually incorrect, and that they have been unreasonable on themselves. And the extraordinary thing is that people who are unreasonable on themselves about flying, or their fear of flying are logical in every other aspect of their lives.

I don't think it's fair for me to take the work of someone else and benefit from it so I think I must recommend that you buy Dr Burns's book The Feeling Good Handbook where he lists the qualities of twisted thinking. He suggests some countermeasures to this twisted thinking which I think are worth mentioning briefly

For instance.

1. Writing down your thoughts in the way that you think of them and see what they really look like
2. Instead of being critical, be complimentary to yourself
3. Test what you say, by asking yourself the question. Where is the evidence for what I think?
4. Ask yourself if your beliefs are really true?
5. Think in smaller chunks rather than the overburdening big picture.
6. Stay in the present, just deal with the next five minutes at most.



Looking at your fear of Flying

This section will invite you to find another way of looking at your fear of flying involving simple principles that you can apply when you become stressed. The first principle is to stay in the present and think about the Now, at most the next five minutes ahead but certainly not hours, days, weeks or months ahead. Don't put yourself in the position where you ask yourself what you'll do if, such and such happens. There's no way that you can be certain of anything happening in the future. Staying in the present means that you deal with the present, and if you allow yourself the luxury of thinking "what will I do that if such and such happens later on" then you are violating this rule, you're not staying in the now and you're creeping off into the unknowable future. This is bound to have a negative impact. Maybe that elastic band would be useful at this stage?

The second principle is to be realistic. Do you really believe that you could go flying without any anxiety at all? So how much anxiety will you take with you? You won't want to take all of it with you and I doubt that you imagine that you wouldn't have any at all. So you need to decide the amount that is realistic and take it in your baggage ... and don't be surprised when it reveals itself. You're allowed to be slightly anxious.

Instead of being hyper-vigilant about all the bad things try to focus your mind on what is happening immediately around you. When you're at the airport waiting listen to the sounds, watch other travellers, taste your meal and refreshments, all this will help you to stay in the present. You can do the same in flight although I also recommend having a supply of books, and things to do. But don't watch the faces of the crew ... unless you are a trained mind reader!

Third principal is, rather than seeing air travel as a problem concentrate on its benefits. What are the benefits of going on this flight, is it a holiday, are you going to see friends, meet your children or grandchildren, promotion and so on? There has to be a good reason, a positive reason and a benefit. Think about a good outcome for your travel.

The fourth principle is to avoid being submissive, do not take what is handed out, take control of it give yourself lots of time to do things so that when the airline demands that you go to the gate, make sure that you've had your lunch or coffee. If the airline demands that you check-in at a certain desk by a certain time make sure you do it in good time so that there is less stress and gradually, you will be taking control of the situation. When you control events they become less stressful than they would otherwise be. If there is a delay, go and ask for information, if there is no information ask when it will become available. Take control. If taking control helps you, then learn to be assertive in a situation where you would normally be passive. You're not going to hear anything that will endanger you. Even an engineering delay would be a good thing because at least they're mending a fault or doing routine maintenance. Do you worry when your car is in the garage? Apart from the bill that is! The car is even safer when it comes out.

As you can imagine there are lots of 'strategies' for achieving things and I don't think that any one is better than another, what I do believe it is that one might be more suitable for you than another. The point is that you may have found one or two that have not worked for you and you have given up because you are applying rule eight of twisted thinking you i.e. *should* have overcome your fear by now. Or you might think I *ought* to have overcome my fear, and as a result you've lapsed into twisted thinking rule number nine "I'm a loser or inadequate". How many ways can there be to overcome fear of flying? It doesn't matter as long as you can find something that will work for you then that's all you need. Don't get twisted up. Be patient.

Many airlines throughout the world run fear of flying courses and most of them have a similar format. The course starts with set periods discussing subjects like the psychology of fear, relaxation exercises, technical talks from pilots, engineers, and other experts from the world of aviation. A short question and answer session is followed by a flight and the presentation of a certificate.

For many people this is an obvious choice because of its convenience and the apparent benefit of a Big Brand endorsement. My reservations about this sort of programme are that depending upon the numbers of people present (up to a hundred and twenty), it's pretty difficult for people to get the

individual attention that they need. However if it works the you then let it work. If this method gives you the strategies that you need to overcome any fears that may occur in the future then go for it.

Amongst the experts in this field the general opinion is that the multidimensional approach is the best way to have a lasting cure for a fear of flying. What does multidimensional mean? It means a number of different approaches to the problem. It means graded exposure to the fear of flying and getting the right sort of information and, most beneficially doing those things in the company of people who have the same sorts of feelings about flying. Being able to discuss thoughts, feelings, emotions, behaviours and strategies with people of an equal status is a very powerful part of overcoming a fear. An effective course should include long term support and back up after the course, which airlines don't give or offer. Ideally the group size should be no larger than six people.

I would like to encourage you to use the survey which is on our web site, to assess your fear. This is unlikely to show that your fear is beyond help but is much more likely to reveal that your fear is *less* than you imagine it to be. If you don't like surveys then another method of getting some structure to how you feel about flying is to write down a hierarchy of fear. At the top of the list is the thing that stresses you most all the way through to the smallest stressor. If you have a list you are just one step away from starting a strategy to deal with them, because as I have said before, your mind is probably such a jumble of thoughts that to deal with them without structure would be impossible.

Remember the comparison I drew with a jigsaw. You have to get some sort of shape and structure for your fear in order to get the shape and structure for the strategy to overcome it.

In the last part of this chapter I'm going to change direction.

I want you to think of your fear of flying, how long you've had it and most importantly what you have actually done about it. In my experience of meeting people with a fear of flying there is an understandable reluctance to get on and tackle the problem, partly because of ignorance regarding the

available help, but mainly because it means having to deliberately and wilfully think of something that is very painful to face.

And so most people have done very little other than have a few random thoughts and the occasional New Year's resolution to do something about it. But that 'something' won't magically appear, it will come only as a result of your actions and I hope that you will accept my compliments and congratulations that you have taken the step of reading this book. I hope you are not going to use one of those twisted thinking rules to say that this is an unworthy achievement, because it is not. I want you to promise yourself that you will prepare a top 10 list of hints and tips for yourself that you can keep in your pocket or handbag so that you can refer to it discreetly for support. Your list will be the tips that work for **you** in addressing **your** fear. The next chapter is about the preparations for your next flight.



Preparations and reminders for your next flight

In this section I'm going to give you a few tips on how to approach a flight. I am assuming that you have done all the things that I have suggested so far and that you've built up sufficient confidence to pick up the telephone and book a flight. Or that you have allowed someone else to include you when they have booked a flight.

Remember that you're only going on this flight because you feel ready to do so, that you have learned to control negative thoughts, that you have a sound base of unshakeable knowledge that you are fit in mind and body and you have lots of strategies ready to employ should your anxieties begin to overwhelm you.

The first thing you do after you have put down the telephone is to congratulate yourself. "Well done me, I've booked a flight." And as soon as the following thought comes into your mind "Oh my goodness what have I done" you ping your elastic band on the word "Oh". You think only positive thoughts from now on! Somewhere along the line we have agreed that you must be content with small steps and although booking the flight is an enormous step, the little step on this occasion is using your thought stopping technique. Little steps make big progress.

It's very likely that just after booking the flight that your levels of fear and anxiety will rocket. Remember that this is a perfectly normal response to what you have done, you can expect to have a raised heartbeat you can expect to breathe more quickly and you can expect to feel slightly alarmed. But don't let these things overtake and minimise your achievements now, or at any other time. Let me remind you that you have learned to be fearful and this fear reflex can be re-activated very easily. Keep it under control.

If you are one of the people who suffers from panic attacks remember that reacting will make it worse and regardless of how you feel you'll come to no physical harm and you will keep breathing, the more you control your breathing the more relaxed you will become.

Now you've got to pass the time between booking the flight and actually getting on the plane. But if you keep a cool head and concentrate on facts rather than feelings you'll succeed. Perhaps this would be a good time to re-consider some of the facts about flying, things like, the fact that there are no such things as air pockets, like remembering that the engines don't strain during takeoff and the fact that aeroplanes don't mind being in cloud; the fact that the pilots will always have enough fuel on board, the wings won't fall off and so on and so on. Give yourself a boost about what you know and get that knowledge to help you.

When you get to the airport make sure you have time to buy a book or a magazine, so there is no excuse for you to get on board without having plenty of material to keep your mind concentrated. And when you buy these things do not remind yourself that you only need these because you're frightened of flying. No, you're buying them because that's how you're going to entertain yourself on the flight. Remember there are no negative thoughts allowed, only positive and realistic ones.

I hope that when you bought your ticket you told the airline that you are an anxious flyer because they might be able to inform the cabin crew who can keep you up to date of what is going on during the flight, later on when you check-in remind the airline that you are an anxious passenger, and when you get on board and remind the cabin crew that you are an anxious passenger.

And if you think this is a problem remind yourself that you have paid for the ticket and you are entitled to some service. As the time of the flight approaches do not start to watch the weather reports, doing that will neither make the weather worse nor better, leave it to the pilot to choose whether you should be flying or not, they are much better qualified than you are. Anyway you've got better things to do. If you have bought a book start to read it before you fly. When you're keen to turn to the next page, close it, so that when you get on the aeroplane you have something to look forward to and you don't have to struggle through the first few pages of the plot. Very few fearful flyers choose to read War and Peace or something similar to entertain them in flight.

Another very important part of your success is recruiting your partner or whoever you are flying with to be your supporter. Someone who will be firm but encouraging in your efforts to deal with your fear. Ideally that person should know you well and understand how you ‘tick’ and someone who can be relied upon to stand by you regardless of the circumstances and importantly understand what you *need* in the way of help, not someone who’ll tell you what you *ought* to be doing. Nor someone who’ll just go along with everything you want to do. Give them this book to read before you travel and they’ll know how to support you.

If you are lucky enough to live near the airport that you’ll be travelling from it’s worth making a visit or two before you travel. This will help you familiarise yourself with the parking areas the restaurant facilities, the check-in areas and the general workings of the airport. To be familiar with something is confidence giving, the less you have to worry about on the day the easier the flight will be. Familiar things create a feeling of security.

In these days with the ever increasing security checks it’s worth leaving yourself lots of time to go through these procedures, rushing causes anxiety under any circumstances. Being at an airport is part of the graded exposure process I was talking about earlier, so the more visits you can make the better. On the day of your flight discuss with your supporter the sort of help that you need. If you want to talk and ask questions make sure that person knows that’s what you want, if you want to be quiet and left your own thoughts then remind them of that too. There is nothing worse than having someone constantly telling you that you’ll be all right and making idle conversation about the weather and the quality of the coffee and the colour of the aeroplane and all the interesting people at the airport when you just want to sit quietly with your own thoughts.

It’s a fact that those closest to us are the ones that want to help us most, but often the ones that can help us least because they are so close to us. Have an agreement with your partner, discuss how you want them to behave towards you. If you have children decide who is going have the responsibility for them at certain stages at the airport and on the aircraft. Have a plan, know what you’re going to do.

Be organised and be in control. Don't let things happen by chance, control them. Some people find it a useful strategy to take a dominant role and be responsible for telling others what is going on, both during the airport procedures and in flight. Explaining what is going on to someone else quite often reinforces the positive view that we have of it. It puts us in a position of 'responsibility' and that has a beneficial effect on the psychology of fear. Perhaps that could be the role of your supporter.

You need to control:

1. Your Emotional well-being
2. Your Physiological well-being
3. Your Psychological well-being
4. Your Physical well-being

Remember that an important part of your overall strategy to overcome your fear is to eat healthily and to make sure that you have had good quality sleep during the week before you fly. Remember good-quality sleep is taken between the hours of 10 o'clock and seven o'clock. You should sleep in a dark and quiet room after a period of relaxation. Get into the habit of taking your sleep at a regular time. Sleep is a complex physiological and mental process and it is the thing that most of us neglect. It is vital to be well rested before your flight. It's the easiest thing to do and yet is always neglected, there are always more important things to worry about ...apparently.

Remember the benefits of your physical well-being, you'll have slept well, prepared well, chosen not to rush and done lots of little things that individually wouldn't make much difference but when done in conjunction with everything else will help you to overcome and control your anxiety. Simple things like wearing warm but light clothes, taking light hand baggage all contribute to feeling strong enough to deal with any worries that may arise. Have a plan to minimise opportunities for anxiety.

Make your emotional well-being secure. You can feel good by congratulating yourself, by being gentle and considerate with yourself and by trying to adopt a 'can do' attitude. Your body needs to be fit during the flight so make sure that you drink plenty of water, avoid eating stodgy foods and confine yourself to light meals like salads and watery fruits.

Most of all you need to attend to your psychological well-being, between booking the ticket and the getting on the flight make sure that you have avoided reading press reports, and avoided the twisted thinking processes that we are prone to, you should avoid describing any of your journey in emotive language. Make all these things so familiar to you that they are a part of the way you go on holiday or take a business trip. Lots of small steps are better than trying to make one big leap.

Let me remind you of some of the myths of flying that we have dispelled: the wings aren't going to fall off because they are made in one piece, if, if, if all the engines were to stop the plane would not fall from the sky but descend just like a glider. Remember that turbulence will not damage the aircraft, it won't harm you if you are strapped in tightly. No one is going to be able to open the doors in flight and if you get struck by lightning it will not affect the aircraft at all.

Stress is a feeling that you get when you have to do something that you feel that you don't have the skill, time confidence or knowledge to do. Even though reality may be different. Deal with stress by describing what is stressing you, describe to yourself the beliefs and attitudes that are generated by the stress and describe what you do as a result of the stress. For example. If you feel that "I'm stressed about turbulence because I know there will be turbulence on the flight I know that I will get anxious about it.". Challenge and change these beliefs so that you can reduce your stress levels. Remember how twisted thinking affects your attitude. Ask yourself difficult questions like what will I be able to change if the flight does encounter turbulence. The answer is, nothing. You can't *change* anything except your attitude to it.

More weather

I have spoken briefly about the weather with regard to turbulence, but of course there is much more to weather than just that. The first thing you need to remember is that the weather does not affect the operation of an aircraft as much as you probably think it does. Rain and wind does not affect how an aeroplane flies. Fog affects roads, railways and ships much more than it affects aviation.

At the airport very bright lights show the centre and edges of all the taxiways and runways so it is always possible to operate aircraft despite very limited visibility. From a flying point of view it is easy to take off in fog because the centre line lights of a runway begin to stream as the aircraft picks up speed, so it is a simple matter to keep the aircraft straight on the runway. In poor visibility ground control radar will ensure that the runways are clear of obstructions and traffic before aircraft are allowed to take off. When landing in fog and poor visibility, aircraft have to be equipped with multiple autopilots, which operate independently but which keep a check on the performance of the others. I have done countless landings where I haven't seen the runway at all .

Aircraft performance is affected by temperature. As the temperature increases the amount of lift on the wings is reduced because the air isn't so 'thick'. However this is taken into account by performance restrictions as the temperature rises. But do not be alarmed because for all intents and purposes the performance of an aircraft is not affected until the temperatures reach something like 45° Centigrade.

As the temperature rises the weight at which an aircraft can take off is reduced so that the aircraft can always perform to a minimum standard. The minimum standard will allow an aircraft to take off and climb without difficulty. When the word minimum is used in aviation it doesn't mean only just able, or only just good enough or any thing like that it remains a very high standard, but the minimum acceptable. There are enormous safety margins for everything we do.

Rain. I wonder why it is that people who are not connected with aviation think that the rain can affect the performance of an aeroplane. The only time moisture can affect an aircraft is when it has frozen. Ice and snow can affect the performance of an aeroplane not rain itself. When operating in ice and snow very strict rules are applied with regard to removing it from the aircraft. Different aircraft have slightly different requirements but they will all be required to have ice and snow removed from the wings before taking off. In flight when ice settles on the front of the wings and engines of the aircraft is removed by circulating hot air around those parts. You may have noticed that on some smaller aircraft that the front of the wing appears to be made of black rubber.

On these aircraft when the ice has settled on the front edge of the wings, hot air is pumped into the black rubber 'boots' which inflate like a tyre and breaks the ice off the wing. Then it deflates ready to expand and remove the next lot of ice that settles. By the way ice and snow is removed on the ground by special de-icing fluids which is either sprayed on to your aircraft just prior to taxiing, or by parking the aircraft under a huge gantry which sprays fluid over the aircraft just before take off.

How lucky we are in aviation that rain fog and wind has such a small affect on what we do. Let's just touch on how weather occurs because it is very simply explained. The air which covers the planet has three qualities, it has movement, it has temperature and it has moisture. We have already heard how the air on the planet moves up down and around because of heating either at the equator, or over land masses and even towns. Air which moves up and down causes turbulence.

Depending upon how quickly the air moves the wind is either gentle or gale force. However when two air masses collide at the edges they sometimes end up swirling around each other, imagine two people at a barn dance, locking arms and swirling around each other, that's how air moves when the edges of air masses collide. As a result of that swirling, just like water going down a plug hole the pressure changes in the middle and in its mildest form it makes a low pressure area, or in its most violent it makes a tornado. The principal is the same. The horizontal movement of the air is called wind.

The other quality that air has is temperature, the hotter the air the hotter the day, the colder the air the colder the day, simple as that. The temperature affects the amount of moisture that can be contained in it. Hot air can hold a lot of moisture, or water, and cold air can't. Very interesting you might say that but how does that affect the weather. If hot air has water in it then when it cools, it condenses out and becomes visible (it turns into cloud or fog), in many ways fog is just the same as low cloud. When the air is very moist the particles of vapour (mist) will combine and become rain.

Mist by the way is the same as fog but not so dense, it's a question of definition not physical differences. That's why on warm autumn day as evening approaches you can feel the moisture in the air which quite often turns into fog patches in fields and around ponds. Ponds of course help to add even more moisture to the air. When the moisture content, direction or temperature of a mass of air changes then so will the weather.

How does the wind affect an aircraft? Once the aircraft is flying the wind affects a plane in the same way that a tidal current affects a boat. It doesn't change the way it floats or is steered but has to be allowed for when navigating. An aircraft makes allowance for the wind by pointing its nose very slightly towards the wind so that the combination of forward movement and the wind ensures that it travels in the required direction.

For takeoff and landing we always try to take off towards the wind because it reduces the distance required to get airborne, that is because the aircraft enjoys the benefit of a small amount of lift from the wings as the wind blows over them. We are allowed to take off and land when the wind is behind us but the wind must not be stronger than 17 miles an hour. Once again it's another built-in safety factor.

We have pretty well covered everything you need to know about flying. There has been a lot of information for you to absorb. You do not have to understand this in one go, I hope that you will read this book frequently and that you will become more and more familiar with the techniques that you

should use. Make sure that you apply the knowledge you have gained. So that was the 'weather' and almost the end of the book.

In summary it's as simple as this. Be fit in your mind and body. Develop positive attitudes. Develop your breathing relaxation and visualisation techniques until they are second nature to you.

Learn and use simple sentences to give yourself-confidence. Remember that if it wasn't safe the pilots wouldn't do it. Knowledge is the best antidote to fear. Confidence in your self is vital. And remember despite how you feel now the chances are that you will overcome your fear of flying.



Booking your flight and more

In this section I am going to give you more tips and more encouragement as you prepare to take your flight. We'll start at the beginning when you book your flight and finish when you collect your baggage at your destination. Then I'm going to send you solo.

Were you going to book your flight and now you're having second thoughts? What should you do? You feel like avoiding it but the consequences for your family or friends are so great that you'd feel really guilty. So what should you do?

If you need encouragement to make your booking remember that there will be benefits from taking the journey, focus on the benefits, remember that making the booking is not the same as getting on the flight. This is just one small step, you have prepared and you are equipped to deal with the sensations and emotions that will occur after making the booking so go ahead and do it. Delaying it will make it worse even though it doesn't feel like that to you right now. Once you've made the booking do not allow yourself to have thoughts about what you've done, if you start to think like that use your thought blocking techniques. And why not treat yourself to something for having achieved this important part of your flight? You still have lots of time before the flight to deal with your fear.

Visiting airports: A reminder

In the time that you have available between now and when you travel you really must try to pay a visit or several visits to the airport that you are leaving from or at least another airport that's easier to get to. It will be time well spent getting used to the sights and sounds. It will help you to familiarise yourself with the things that go on at airports. If you immerse yourself in the atmosphere while there are no pressures on you to travel then you are more likely to develop some good thoughts about airports. Try to see an airport in the way that you would if you have no concerns at all about flying. Restructuring your pictures are as important as restructuring your thoughts. When you have paid a

couple of visit to an airport without any pressures on you, go again imagining that this time you're going to travel and when anxieties appear then just face them do not under any circumstances run away from them. The more you face your anxieties the smaller they will become. What you should do now is to say to yourself "I shall go to an airport next week or tomorrow." but certainly fix a date to start your visits.

Preparation

There isn't a person or a family in the world who doesn't get stressed by the preparations for going away. The best way to overcome and minimise your stress is to prepare in advance, make absolutely certain that your passport is valid for the period of time that you are away, remember that some countries require you to have a valid passport extending beyond the time you expect to stay. You should book your travel insurance well in advance. If you do these things over a period of time before you need to fly, then none of them will cause excessive stress. And when the time comes for travelling everything will be in place and you will be certain that you have everything you need. That is one plan but I know there are many people who preferred to leave things to the last moment and avoid thinking about their flight. Your usual way of doing things may not be helpful.

At the airport again!

I hope that you were able to pay some visit to airports and becoming more familiar with the things that go on. Perhaps if your departure airport was too far away to have visited I hope that you will have at least tried to see another airport. Anyway you are the airport now and we must deal with matters as they are. Remember that airports do not cater for anxious passengers, expect there to be lots of rushing, lots of noise, and lots of poor instructions and baffling signage. (See my book *The Other Side of Fear...a Pilot's Life*) Things that are familiar to people working at the airport are taken for granted by them, so expect them to be less than patient if you ask them questions that seem obvious to them. It is not a sign of things to come. Make being at the airport as stress free as possible.

Checking in

If you have given yourself plenty of time to travel you should arrive at the check-in or baggage drop, before the really long queues begin. If you have made a previous visit to the airport you'll know which check-in areas to go to. If you have been able to check in on line then you will just need to drop off your bags. Have your passport and travel documents ready to show as you approach the desks and, remember to tell the check-in staff that you are an anxious passenger.

Remember too that the security questions they ask you are not because of heightened security risks but are perfectly normal. Don't start looking at other people imagining that they are comfortable with flying, or that they are terrorists ...they are more likely to be people who are as anxious or even more anxious than you are. Don't start wondering whether there will be too many people on the aeroplane and make it too heavy to take off... in fact don't think any unhelpful thoughts at all ...be positive and stay in the present. Remember you are allowed to be a little bit anxious. Leave for the boarding gate as soon as you can.

The Boarding Gate

I know that one of the things people do when they arrive at the boarding gate is to start checking the aeroplane if it is in view. This is perfectly natural but it does give the chance of some negative thoughts to creep in. One of the popular worries is seeing an engineer working on the aircraft. Remember that a little maintenance on an aircraft is done on every stop, and this is because it means the aircraft does not have to go out of service for long periods. If you could have a little bit of your servicing done on your car each time you visit the supermarket, would that not be much easier for you than the inconvenience of having to take it to the service station every few months? Imagine never having to take your car to the service station again. That's what happens to the aeroplane most of the time. When they are out of service and out of your sight they're in the hangar being stripped and rebuilt.

You will see the staff rushing around trying to coordinate everything, this doesn't mean that they are badly organised or worried, or that something has gone wrong it just means that they are working to a very tight time schedule and as the departure time approaches they need to coordinate everything for an on-time departure.

When the flight is called don't join the queue immediately wait until it has shortened so that you don't have to wait in line for so long, meanwhile just continue doing your relaxation exercises. When you are on board there will always be time for you to settle down and get the things you need from your bags before the engines start. Remember to stay in the present. Concentrate on what is going on immediately around you; don't let your thoughts wander. Remember that going over 'What ifs' in your mind will make the situation seem worse. Keep only positive thoughts in your mind.

Taking your seat

Once you settle into your seat start your breathing exercises, your relaxation exercises, and try to recall your peaceful place. I hope that you have your elastic band on your wrist so that if the negative thoughts creep in you can repel them immediately. Stay in the present and remember that you only have to deal with 'now'. Make yourself comfortable and have all the things around you that you will need for the first part of your flight. Have your magazines tucked into the seat pocket in front of you. Have your books ready to read. Have your smart device ready for after take off.

Breathe slowly and deeply, counting as you do so. Close your eyes and remember your peaceful place. Tell yourself that you will succeed. Remember that you are allowed to be a little bit anxious. Do not be put off by all the activity of the cabin crew and by any of the many announcements that will be made. These are all perfectly normal and a part of every flight.

Doors closing

You will probably hear the doors close with a clunk and sometimes it shakes the plane, this is normal. The air conditioning will be supplying enough fresh air to satisfy everybody's needs. Shortly after the doors have closed there will probably be more announcements. Listen carefully to the safety briefing, read the safety card so that you will know what to do and where to go in the unlikely event of having to leave the aircraft unexpectedly.

Continue with your breathing, visualisation and relaxation techniques. There will be lots of activity around you; this is normal. The captain will probably speak to you about the weather on your route, the time it will take and the weather at your destination. Remember pilots deal with facts and if they say something that unsettles you or something that you do not understand check with the cabin crew who will be pleased to help you. Pilots sometimes display a casualness and indifference that can be off putting, but take no notice they're paid to fly not to entertain you.

Start up

Just before the engines start you will probably hear the air conditioning fans stop running. This is to help the engines start more easily. As soon as the engines are running the air conditioning will start up again. Air is still being supplied to the passengers. Modern jet engines take a long while to start and during this time the engines sounds will vary from a low rumble to a high pitched whine. As each engine starts so the lights will go on and off as each engine supplies electricity and power to the aircraft systems. This is perfectly normal ...but you know this already. There will also be noises as the various systems on the aircraft connect to the engines ...but you know this already so don't let it surprise you. Remember to continue with your breathing visualisation and relaxation exercises.

Push back

At almost every modern airport your aircraft will be pushed backwards into the taxi position, while this is happening there might be some jolts and banging and all sorts of odd noises this is all perfectly normal. You do not need to know what every noise is. And during the push back the cabin crew will be

continuing with their many duties which they have to perform before the aircraft can taxi to the runway. But you know all this.

Taxiing out

Some aircraft need extra power to start moving while others just need to release the brakes and they will move. During the taxi to the runway you might hear the noises of the pumps and brakes working, sometimes you will hear the wheels bumping over the lights which mark the centre of the taxi way. You will often be taxiing along while other aircraft on parallel taxiways will be heading for the same runway this is perfectly normal and quite safe.

Planes will be a long way apart despite what it looks like to you. The cabin crew will be checking that everyone has their seat belts fastened that their hand baggage is stored correctly, that the overhead baggage lockers are secure and that there are no passengers in the toilets. That's why they sometimes have the loo doors open for take off ...as a reminder that they've done their checks. When all these procedures are complete you will hear the ding dong is as the crew report to each other. You know all this now so there's no reason to be as anxious as you have been on previous flights.

Waiting before take off

If you are travelling at a peak time you will almost certainly have to wait before you are able to take off. In fact you will probably move a few yards along the queue as each aircraft takes off. Sometimes other aircraft will be allowed to overtake you if they are travelling in a different direction from your flight. If the delay is longer than expected the pilot will probably speak to you. After the ding dongs for take off the cabin crew will remain seated and not have a presence in the cabin even though there may be more delays. If this happens go through your breathing routine close your eyes and think of your visualisation your happy place and do your relaxation exercises. Some airlines announce "Cabin Crew Seats for take off."

The take off

As the aircraft lines up on the runway you will probably reach a peak of anxiety. The take off despite what you feel and what you think is a perfectly straightforward procedure. It is much simpler to do than you imagine. Prepare for the extra noise during takeoff. Remember that you are surrounded by noise from the engines, that the runway is not as smooth as a normal highway, that the baggage lockers will rattle, and anything that can make a noise will make a noise during the take off.

Do not be alarmed and tell yourself that this is perfectly normal. Tell yourself too that the engines are not straining and are probably working at less than 95% of their full power. Concentrate on your breathing technique. There is room enough to take off or stop. Your worry and anxiety won't help either you or the pilots. But you know this. Now it's just a question of letting these facts override your feelings. Relax, breathe, visualise. Remember pilots aren't taught to strain the engines.

Climbing after take off

As the aircraft gets airborne you will probably think that the nose will be pointing too high. In reality this will not be happening and the pilot will be controlling the position of the nose to the nearest degree to ensure that the plane climbs efficiently and safely. The nose angle will be different for different planes, but will be approximately 25 degrees above the level position. The plane will climb to approximately 6000 feet before it levels off. This is the point where the engine power will be reduced to the point where you think they have stopped. Did you know this? I think you did.

The engines have not stopped, you are not descending, and you are not in danger. The aircraft will be flying level. The aircraft will not be losing speed. Despite what you feel and think the aircraft will be flying normally. When your aircraft is clear of other planes, you will be allowed to continue your climb; you will hear the engine noise increase and the nose will come up a little. You will probably stay in this climb all the way up to your cruising height which will be anywhere between 15,000 and

40,000 feet according to the aircraft you are in and the length of your route. During the climb the engine noise will be less and less noticeable.

In the clouds

It's more than likely that at some stage during the climb you will be in cloud. Do you remember that anxious flyers worry about being in cloud because they believe that there is a danger of getting near to other aircraft or that it is difficult to navigate or that there is some other sort of danger? These are perfectly normal feelings and but are quite wrong. There is no danger at all when you are in the clouds.

The pilots will always navigate from their flight instruments whether they are in cloud or not. It is of course likely to be a little bit bumpy in cloud for the reasons that I have mentioned earlier. Sometimes the clouds can be isolated like the sort you get on a nice summer's day or they can be flat and extensive, they can be thin layers or they can extend from ground level up to 20,000 feet or more. Try not to be anxious when the plane is in cloud. It is more than likely that eventually you will be clear of them and be enjoying the sunshine above them. Or at night of course enjoying the stars and moonshine.

Cruising

It will take about 25 minutes for an aircraft to reach its cruising height after take off. In the cruise the pilot will be navigating the aircraft while you are doing your visualisations your breathing exercises and your relaxation techniques. Do not be afraid to walk around during the flight you will not fall through the floor nor will you un-balance the plane or do anything that can upset the plane at all. On a long flight the cabin crew will have periods of rest when they will not be quite so visible in the cabin but there will always be someone on duty that you can speak to or who can attend to your needs. It is not necessary for you to hang on to the armrests to keep the aircraft airborne. If you relax the plane will continue flying and if you sleep the plane will continue flying normally ...the crew do

not need you to be awake or to be tense to help the plane fly safely. Why not read some of those expensive magazines you bought before you got on board?

Climbing again

Sometimes on a very long flight the plane will start to climb after it had been steady at one height for a few hours. If you remember that an aeroplane will consume anything up to eight tonnes of fuel every hour then it is getting much lighter as the flight continues. This means that it can climb higher which means that it can save fuel so the pilot will take the opportunity of climbing every time that air traffic control say that there is an unoccupied cruising level above them. If this happens at night when you have been sleeping you may be woken by the sound of the engine noise which normally alarms anxious flyers, now that you know what it is you can go back to sleep. I think I've mentioned this already!

Descent

One hundred and fifty miles or so from your destination your aircraft will start descending. You may notice this from a change in the air-conditioning when there might be a whooshing sound as the pumps and fans maintain the air supply as the engines reduced power. You might notice that the nose goes down a little bit. During the first part of the descent the cabin crew will still be clearing the cabin, and telling you that the seat belt signs will be going on and if you wish to visit the toilets and should do so now. If it has been a long flight the queues for the toilets will be quite long so make sure that you get a good place.

There will be a lot of activity in the cabin during this last part of the flight, there will be announcements about customs and immigration formalities, there will be information about car hire and hotel deals and all manner of things. The cabin crew will be rushing around collecting headsets and passing messages to passengers with onward bookings. Remain calm and ignore what is going on around you. I mention this as a reminder, because you know this already.

Approach to landing

To the pilots the approach starts from 10,000 feet. Their workload increases and they will be checking fuel reserves the weather and the procedures for the runway that they are going to land on. They will give the cabin crew and you a warning that there is 10 minutes to landing; this is to prompt the cabin crew into finalising the cabin preparations. There will be a lot of manoeuvring in this part of the flight and you will hear the noises of the wheels coming down, and the flaps being extended. There will be many changes of engine noise as the pilots reduce speed. On the final approach the automatic speed control will vary the engine power so that the speed is absolutely correct. The pilots will tell the cabin crew to take their seats for landing. They will strap themselves in their seats and open the curtains and between the cabins so that all their passengers are in view.

Landing

When the aircraft lands on a wet runway you might find the landing is harder than you might expect, this is so that the water is squeezed out of the tyres and allow the aircraft to brake more efficiently but you know all this...in fact you know quite a lot by now. Following this there will be a surge of engine power as reverse thrust is used. Remember that this is a very noisy but normal procedure. Aircraft have very very powerful brakes, and if they are used to their full you must not imagine that the aircraft is running out of runway or space in which to stop. The pilots may have been asked to vacate the runway as quickly and as safely as they can, so that other aircraft can use it. I think you can probably have worked that out for yourself by now.

After the landing you will hear more noises as the flaps change position, as some of the engines are shut off and as the air-conditioning meets the lower demands on the ground, the cabin crew will start to move around and prepare for your disembarkation. At busy modern airports now it can be up to half an hour and between landing and disembarking.

What do you do after your flight?

Soon you will be home and thinking about the flight you've just made. Think of all the positive things that happened, think of all the successful techniques you used to overcome your anxiety. Find as many things as you can compliment yourself for. Where you became anxious and think about what you did and what you can do to reduce this anxiety the next time you fly. Whatever the outcome of any flight you must see everything as progress. There is never progress without some setbacks, you must accept these as part of overcoming your fear.



FINALLY

You have now completed this short fear of flying course. You have learned a lot of stuff, some may have interested you some will not have. Knowledge is key. Without knowledge or facts you can't overwrite your feelings. That was our task at the beginning to replace your feelings with my facts. I hope that you don't expect to be able to put this book down, pick up the telephone to book a flight and fly happily ever after. That would be unrealistic, and being realistic has been an important part of this course. What you should do now is reflect on your new knowledge. Your knowledge like the importance of positive thinking, remembering to avoid emotive language, avoiding media reports about flying, applying your newfound knowledge and so on. A small key can open a large door and right now you may not be sure what your key is and what it will unlock. When you're ready, read this book again, and write down the important messages that come from it. Not necessarily the things that I have said, but much more importantly the things that you have worked out for yourself. As I said I cannot give you a cure for your fear of flying, you are the person who has to face the fear, and you have to find the way to overcome your fear. I hope that I have been able to help you. I hope that soon you will be flying without fear and with less anxiety.

Now what you should do is to write down three things that you are going to do differently as a result of reading this course. If you change nothing ... nothing will change.

So change what you think, change what you feel and you'll find you'll be able to change what you do.

Happy landings and congratulations for what you've done.

Captain Keith



Other books by Captain Keith Godfrey

Fly without Fear

A book in three parts, Facts, the Psychology of fear and Motivation and Strategies. Published over 15 years ago this has been one of the most popular books ever written for fearful flyers.

Face the Fear and Go Flying Anyway

If you've left it too late to find a fear of flying course and you don't know how you're going to manage on your flight this book will give you confidence to do it. It'll give you all the help you need in the shortest possible time. You can even read it on the way to the airport and in the Departure lounge or at the gate because it'll take just over an hour to read and you'll be ready to take your flight armed with a plan to deal with your fear of flying permanently

The Other Side of Fear... a Pilot's Life

Prompted by a fearful flyer to write a book to entertain and engage anxious passengers this book is about Captain Keith's love of flying, how his career started, all the way through to retirement. But that's not really what this book is. It's a sideways and cynical look at commercial aviation which will probably make you laugh out loud. But there's nothing to cause you to worry ...quite the opposite. Airports as you've never thought of them. Concorde pilots as you've never known them. Horse freighting aircraft that you've never heard of, hospital portering you hadn't thought about, Bank strikes, but most importantly nothing of important people except the Queen and Brad Pitt.

Training Skills for Training Pilots

A book for professional pilots who want to improve their instructional and training skills.

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