

Feel the fear and go flying anyway

by Captain Keith Godfrey © 2019 Keith Godfrey

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Cover design by Captain Keith Godfrey www.flyingwithoutfear.com 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.

This publication is based on the audio book of the same name.

About the author

Captain Keith has been flying since 1959, has 20,000 hours flying experience, has flown 80 different types of planes and has never had a scare as passenger or pilot. He was a pilot for British Airways for 28 years. He has been helping people to overcome their fear of flying for over 20 years.

Introduction and Lesson One

Hello, this is Captain Keith, welcome aboard. The fear of flying is a learned fear which means that you can unlearn it too.

The first thing I want to say is that although this book is based on a well recognised counselling process it is not full of mumbo-jumbo touchy-feely nonsense. I'm a pilot not a counsellor. It is down to earth and based on principles of common sense and empathy. Put simply, what you think determines what you feel and how you feel determines how you behave. If you think something is unpleasant you'll avoid it because it just wouldn't feel good. You are much more likely to do something that you think is nice because it would feel good. You will often hear me say throughout this book what you think is what you feel and what you feel determines how you behave.

In the next hour or so, something will change that will make you less fearful of flying. Neither of us can know exactly what it will be, it may be something I say or something you realise for yourself, but there will be a change in your attitude to flying.

But you can't benefit from what I'm saying if your head is full of worries so I want you to hand your fear over to me right now and spend the next hour or so, being less anxious and less worried, then you'll be

able can hear all the stuff I have to say about flying without that nagging worry in the background that so often stops you from thinking clearly. I want you to hear and take in and think about the things I am saying. So please forget all your previous worries and fears, clear your head and be confident that working together we will succeed. Forget them, trust me and trust yourself.

Hand your fear over to me right now and try to think like I do, like a pilot. If you want your fear back at the end of the book then just ask me and reluctantly I'll let you have it back. So until you let me know I'll look after your fear.

So let's start our engines and get flying.

One of the difficulties in writing a book to help someone overcome a fear of flying is that there are so many places to start from. Should I start by dealing with the most common fears or should I start with more general things like how an aeroplane flies? Wherever I start it will be good for some people and not so good for others, so please bear with me and accept my judgement that I've tried to write this in a logical sequence and that somewhere along the line I will address the thing, or things that worry you.

I'll talk about why a plane flies and why a garden shed doesn't. You've got to know this 'cos if you think flying is magic or balanced on a knife edge or is about defying gravity then this thought will always be rumbling in the background. And I say why a planes fly rather than how planes fly because the word how suggests that it's something I have to convince you about rather than simply explain to you. I'll talk about turbulence of course. I'll talk about fear itself and ways to take control, and go off in any convenient direction to cover other worries, and we'll finish with some strategies and things that you should use to **manage** your fears. On the way I'll dispose of a few myths. For example, there are no such things as air pockets. Air pockets do not exist. There cannot be holes in air. Bubbles which are holes in water float to the surface, if there were bubbles in air, 'air pockets' they too would float upwards away from where aircraft are flying, up to the top of the atmosphere. If such things existed would there not be occasions on the ground when we couldn't breathe?

Some people like to know a lot about flying and others need to know only enough to get them on a flight to go on holiday, to meet relatives or an occasional business trip so I have tried to explain everything as simply as possible to cater for everyone.

It is very unlikely that one piece of information or one strategy or one insight will cure your fear of flying, it's better to think about managing your fear rather than trying to overcome it completely. A strategy to deal with your fear of flying will be a combination of many, small things. A single strand of cotton can be easily broken, many strands are much stronger. The more things you can find to help you, the more likely it is that

you'll find a strong successful and **lasting** strategy. It's very unlikely that you will have a sudden moment of enlightenment, you are much more likely to have a gradual change in your attitude to flying, but if you feel that you do have a sudden and enlightening moment, just think of all the things you've found out about and learnt about before it happened!

Do not aim for the top of the mountain, aim to climb as far as you can on each occasion. Being realistic is an important part of your strategy. I want you to congratulate yourself for being courageous enough to listen to this book. One common feature of fearful flyers is to be very self-critical rather than being complimentary, we wouldn't try to encourage children by being critical, rather we'd use a mixture of reality and encouragement.

I've written this so that it'll take you about an hour to read, or a little more if you're listening to the book version. So, in about an hour from now you could, and should be feeling a whole lot better about flying than you do right now. No doubt there will be bits in it that, for a moment may make you feel **more** nervous, but please, just hang on in there because it won't last long once you hear the explanations. I'm not going to say anything that will make you more nervous than you are right now.

Don't forget ... you're not unusual, over 40% of people who fly **are** nervous.

This is a face to face conversation between us where we can talk about all the things that you want to know about flying to help you find strategies to manage your next couple of flights. During this book don't worry if I repeat myself because that's what happens when you need to emphasise something.

It's the easiest things in the world to tell other people what to do.

but one of the most unsuccessful things in the world is just that, telling other people what to do.

So I'm not going to tell you what you should or shouldn't be doing, should or shouldn't be thinking.

All the ideas and suggestions in this book are just thatideas and suggestions. You don't **have** to do them nor do you **have** to believe them, but they are things that I have suggested to fearful flyers in the past, and working on the basis that they have worked for thousands of other people, I'm sure they'll work for you.

None of us is born with a fear of flying, so it's reasonable to say that you have learnt your fear, and this book is the start of unlearning it.

Let's start with measuring your fear level because if you don't know where you're starting you'll never know where you got to. On a scale of 1 to 10 where one is how I feel about flying and 10 is being paralysed with fear, choose a number that reflects how you feel right now. Choose another number where you would be in a perfect world. Choose another number where you would like to be. Finally choose a number that you would accept if I could **guarantee** to get you to that level.

Lesson Two Getting Started

I want you to know from the start that I understand why you're feeling like you do. After all I've been helping people to address their fear of flying for more than 20 years and I'm not without fears of my own I'm human too. I'm on your side and I want you to succeed, but right now you're short of time so this book is straight to the point and is the very least you need to know to get on your flight with more confidence than you had even a moment ago. Please don't be put off by my straight talking and direct style. Every word has to count and every word is here to help you. AND, time is short. We're not going to do hopeful or wishful thinking... we're going to be realistic. Realistic thoughts realistic feelings and realistic behaviour. It's too soon for you to think of feeling like I do about flying.

Many fearful flyers, leave it to the last moment to address their fear because they hope, despite all the evidence, that their fear will just go away. Of course, they planned to go on a fear of flying course ... but for some reason, just didn't get round to it.

They thought that by ignoring it that, it would just go away or that the flight was so far in the future that nothing needed to be done right then. Maybe, they just couldn't face their fear. None of these hopes and thoughts brought a solution. Does this sound like you? Feelings of being scared **don't** just go away. Well, don't be hard on yourself, almost everyone is like that at some stage. None of that matters anymore, you're facing it now. Well done.

Have you noticed that more you try to suppress a thought the more it seems to come into your head?

For example try not thinking about icebergs. Tell me what you're not thinking about right now? You cannot avoid thinking of the things you're trying to forget, so I understand why you couldn't face facing the fear, but is it too late to do anything? No it's most definitely not! So forget icebergs and let's actually **think** confidently about one day, flying as a passenger.

At least and at last you've realised that you've got to do something ...anything. You've bought this book and with it you've bought some time to prepare for your next flight. With enough courage and the will to succeed you'll be able to do this. I promise.

Listen in and you'll discover that there's a very big chance of a ... 'fear less flight'. First though I need you to trust me, secondly and more importantly ... to trust yourself. You are not going to end up doing anything that you don't want to do because YOU have the RIGHT to cancel your flight if you want to.

There's nothing in the Bill of Rights or the Magna Carta or any other constitutional statement that says you MUST fly. The choice is yours. But it should be an informed choice based on facts. Facts about the way you think, facts about the way you feel, facts about commercial aviation in general, and facts about safety in particular.

I want you to spend the next hour or so, being less anxious and less worried, so that you can hear all the stuff I have to say about flying without any nagging fears in the background. I want you to forget your fears for a while so that you can take in and think about everything I am saying.

Hand your fear to me and start to think like I do, from a pilot's point of view. If you want your fear back at the end of the book then just ask me and reluctantly I'll let you have it back. Until you let me know I'll look after your fear until you want it back.

Flying planes is normal to me, flying planes is straightforward, flying planes is not balanced on a knife edge. Flying is safe. Flying is what I do to earn money. To my kids, their Dad just went to work and came home again after a few days away. To my Co-pilot I was a fellow professional pilot. To an insurance company I was no greater risk to insure than you are. To my wife I was an ordinary husband who'd often forget to buy milk on the way home. I'm an ordinary person. Pilots and crew are ordinary people but who have a job that's hidden in a certain amount of mystery and myth. It is a job. Remind yourself of that whenever you feel anxious. This is what I do! I can't actually earn a living any other way. I'm a pilot.

In this book I'm not going to say a single thing that isn't true, it may be simplified for convenience but everything is true. And true for this reason. If you discover that I have told you the tiniest lie, why would you believe anything else that I've said? I need you to trust me, and I'm not going to talk you into anything you don't want to do. The choice is yours. This is your fear not mine, I cannot cure your fear but I can explain ways to deal with it, based on evidence and a genuine desire to help you. I don't want to fix your fear ... I want you to fix it.

If there were a magic cure or a quick fix I'd give it to you just to put my competitors out of business. But there isn't. But the great thing about finding your own fix is that it belongs to you, you get ownership not dependence. The quickest fix is to start now. The best fix would have been to start yesterday. The worst fix is to delay again until tomorrow.

Let's think about how you're feeling if you've got a flight coming up soon, I'm sure you're not feeling too good. In fact you couldn't feel worse could you? In fact over the last few days or weeks it's probably been getting worse. You probably don't sleep too well either. No doubt you're constantly pre-occupied, anxious maybe even short tempered or reclusive. Feelings that you get from knowing you have to go flying

and a sense of helplessness to control those feelings. Are things getting worse the more you try to forget them?

The question is, has all that worrying helped you so far? Has all that worry changed a single thing? Are you feeling better? No of course you're not ... **nothing** seems to make the feelings go away.

But you don't **need** to make the feelings go away ... what you need to do is to **MANAGE** them and that's what you'll discover over the next hour or so.

Any improvement is going to be helpful and that's exactly what this book will do for you . It will give you confidence and help, but you've got to help yourself as well. If you're prepared to do that then we really can make progress.

When you're safely back home after your next flight you have to promise yourself to sign up for a fear of flying course, because this book and the advice in it won't have the same impact in the future. This book is a one-off, fix-it-for-a-few-flights cure.

When you get back from your next flight you've got to **promise** yourself to do something about your fear of flying as soon as you can. You might even find time to book a course before you go? Whenever you book the course, it'll give you confidence for this next flight. It's a bit like having tooth ache, once you know that you're going to the dentist and that the pain won't last forever, then you'll be able to manage the pain you've got right now.



Lesson Three Magic or Science?

How does a plane fly? If I were to ask you whether it works by magic or science you'd probably, but reluctantly say science BUT you'd like to say magic. Science is the factual side of flying, it's My Side whereas the magic is the emotional and feeling side of flying, that's Your Side. (See my Kindle Book: The Other Side Of Fear ... A Pilots Life.)

As a pilot I deal in facts but as a fearful flyer ...you deal in feelings. Your feeling are your facts, and in a way there's nothing wrong with that but the problem is that you draw the wrong conclusions from your facts. Conclusions that inevitably feed your fear. Unfortunately, when you talk about feelings, you probably talk in non technical language ... you're more likely to talk in emotive and therefore, unhelpful language. (Remember what you think is what you feel, and what you feel determines how you behave)

A surgeon wouldn't say to you that s/he was going to slice open your stomach rummage around inside you to find the bit that's faulty then hack it out or mend it, then sew up the gash so nothing falls out and hope that you survive. You'd expect to hear precise, unemotional reassuring medical facts. Facts that can't be misinterpreted or mis understood. Facts told to you by using the right words.

The right words are important for you, the word plummeting isn't as helpful as the word descending. Describe flying and your feelings about it in unemotional and un-emotive words. Hitting turbulence isn't as helpful as ...saying that you encountered turbulence. The point of no return isn't as helpful as saying the take off.

It's much more sensible to control your words rather than imagining that you could solve all your worries by being allowed to fly the plane, which is something fearful flyers say would make them feel better though I don't know what it would do for the nerves of the other passengers !

And if you can control your feelings, the chances are you'll think flying is less danger and magic and more science and safety. Then you'll be on an upward spiral of knowledge, confidence and lots of happy holidays, family reunions or successful business trips to look forward to.

Imagine, that you have written all your worries about flying on an A4 piece of paper, and imagine that I too have similar piece of paper with all my facts on. We're going to slide my paper over your paper so that you're looking at more of my facts than your feelings. I'm a kind person and I know it would be impossible for you to ignore ALL your feelings so I'm going to let you keep a few because you're human and it's

normal to be a bit anxious. If you were to try to keep a lid on all your feelings you'll feel like a pressure cooker with no safety valve and one day it could all burst out.

So you're allowed some anxiety. But you must start to normalise flying by incorporating more and more facts and fewer and fewer feelings.

Let's set a scene for a moment. Imagine some people getting on a boat to go for a cruise. How likely is it that any of them are thinking about how a boat floats? I'd say very unlikely. Imagine the same people waiting to get on a plane. How likely is it that they wonder how a plane flies? By contrast I'd say very likely.

Why is this? First we don't question the effect of water, after all we've been playing in it since bath time when we were children. We played with floating ducks and buckets. We took it for granted that the ducks floated on the water we didn't consider that the mass of water displaced is equal to some mathematical formula involving upthrust, neither did we question that when we filled toy buckets with water they sank. When we got older we even learnt to swim we didn't think of the forces of buoyancy it's just something that was real and at that stage would probably not even have heard of Archimedes.⁸

OK so how does a plane fly? With a bit of imagination, I can show you that a plane flies because of science. I'm going to wave a magic wand and make water invisible, and the trade off is going to be that air becomes visible.

So in future, when you look up into the sky I want you to 'see' a light blue jelly. When you see a plane flying along you'll notice that above the wing the jelly looks thin and pale blue but below the wing the plane seems to be sitting on thick dark blue jelly. If you saw this, you'd stop being amazed about why an aeroplane flies because you could SEE what's keeping it up ... it's being sucked upwards by the low pressure on the top of the wing and supported underneath by a great big thick, solid chunk of high speed air.

This is all very well you might think but why is the air thinner above the wing and thicker below. Well Because it is. It's a Scientific Law and Scientific Laws don't change ... that's why they are Laws, and this particular one, which was discovered by a chap called Dan states that if 'this' happens, then as a consequence 'something else' will happen. The laws of science apply all over the place in aviation. We don't have to keep our fingers crossed to make sure planes keep flying.

Dan Bernoulli's scientific law says that if air or water, travels over a curved surface its pressure will drop. If you've ever washed the roof of a car or a window higher than your shoulders, you'll know that water trickles down your arm ... and doesn't drip off the end of your elbow but goes round the bend of your elbow and sticks to your skin. Air does that over a wing and that's how it's able to produce suction (Lift).

Some more Science: If you drop a ball on the floor at the foot of the stairs it'll bounce, stop and stay where it is, if you drop a ball at the top of the stairs the chances are it'll bounce all the way down to the bottom. That's the effect of gravity. Put a ball on a table and it will stay where it is. Gravity is pulling it down and the table is pushing up with exactly the same force so the ball stays where it is. Just because you can't see the forces it doesn't mean that there aren't any! Now make the table invisible and it would look like magic. So if something stays up without any apparent support and doesn't **appear** to be affected by gravity, we'd say it defies gravity, And that is what most fearful flyers think an aeroplane does ... defies gravity.

Well it can't and it doesn't ... it may appear to, but it doesn't because while gravity pulls something down if we apply an opposite (and invisible) force upwards (from the wings) it'll stay where it is.

The force that resists gravity on a plane is called lift, but I want to call it Suction. If the suction upwards from the wings exceeds the weight of the plane (however much it is) it will climb. If the suction is the same (as the weight) it'll stay at the same height, if the suction is less (than the weight) the plane will descend.

An aircraft wing gets suction by travelling through the air. That's why a plane accelerates along the runway before it takes off. As it gets faster more and more air goes over the wings. Because the wings are shaped like the back of a spoon as the air goes over the top, the pressure falls, that's why you'd see a very pale blue jelly above the wing. Under the wing the pressure is increasing ... that's why you'd see thick dark blue jelly underneath. And When there's enough suction upwards and enough support underneath, the plane will fly. It may LOOK like magic but it's not, it's all SCIENCE.

Human beings tend to believe in the things we can see. How hard is it to believe that a magician is fooling us, we know it's a trick but we believe not only what we can see but what the magician wants us to see. Seeing is believing, which sometimes is fun but when it comes to flying not seeing makes us anxious.

Find yourself a picture of a Hydrofoil boat. It's a boat that floats on its hull until it goes fast enough for the Hydrofoil at each corner to lift the boat out of the water. Why is that easier to believe than how a wing on a plane works? It's because you can see it. By the way a plane's wing is called an Aerofoil.

Now to prove it! Find a spoon and turn on your cold tap fully. Hold the spoon so that it hangs loosely and vertically from your thumb and forefinger. Don't hold it too tightly, allow it to move freely. Now let the back of the spoon touch the flow of water and you'll find ... go and do it... and when you've done it you can carry on listening.

You'll have discovered that: ... it was sucked into the flow of water. (If it didn't you were holding it too tightly.) If you're soaking wet you held it the wrong way round.

Now think about the shape of the top of a wing ...it's not a million miles from the shape of your spoon. Imagine turning the spoon and water through 90 degrees and pretend that instead of water, air is being blown over the back of the spoon and you'll get the same effect. That's how a wing gets lift. If the wings go up and you're in a cabin that's connected to the wings ... you'll fly too. No magic, no defying gravity, just science.

If that explanation doesn't work for you, think of a kite. All the time the kite is held against the wind by someone holding the string it'll stay up. If you were sitting on the kite you'd feel that wind on your face. If I cut the string you'd go with the wind and you wouldn't feel it on your face. The kite would eventually flutter with the wind and back onto the ground. The kite stays up because of the wind going over it ...it's like a wing but a very inefficient one. If when I cut the string of the kite you're sitting on, you started an engine that moved you into the wind, you may not be moving over the ground but you'd be moving thru' the air so you'd stay flying. A commercial plane has engines powerful enough to make progress against the wind.

Of course an aeroplane will fly without the wind blowing. Just like a cyclist peddling on a calm day the movement of the bike causes a wind to blow into the cyclist's face. The faster the cyclist goes the more wind in his or her face. Just like a cyclist, a plane makes sufficient wind over its wings to lift it off the ground and to fly.

Have you ever wondered how something as heavy as a Jumbo jet can fly? If it has anything to do with the weight why doesn't a garden shed fly? Have you ever looked at a garden shed and wondered ... that's not very heavy why doesn't it fly?

Why is that ? A brick isn't very heavy compared to a Jumbo jet and it doesn't fly as well either, why is that?

Here's a myth buster before we go to the next chapter. The wings can't fall off because they are made as one piece, they're not stuck on to the side of the cabin. The cabin is built around the wings. Real aeroplanes are not like model aeroplanes .



Lesson Four What are Risks?

I realise that you see most things in commercial aviation as risky and I understand why you think that. But to me that means you're looking at things the wrong way around so I'm going to show you another way to look at things... that is to say my way. Remember your way is the emotional way and it's relatively uninformed way whereas my way is factual.

We talk about things being risky, people being risk averse or about taking a risk. But applied to flying risk is not something we suffer from, it's what's left over when we've taken all possible precautions.

As a fearful flyer you think of risk, as a professional pilot I think of safety. Safety is the opposite of risk, let me explain. If you leave your unlocked car overnight in a poorly lit area with your handbag or wallet on the driver's seat and the keys in the ignition, would you expect any of it to be there in the morning? The car and your possessions are called assets. Leaving them in the situation that I have just described means that there is a threat to your assets, a threat of being stolen. If you remove the keys and hide your possessions the risk of your car being stolen is reduced, however the threat remains, to a car thief your vehicle is always a target because he's a car thief, every car is under the threat of being stolen by him ... with the keys in it's easier for him, and with the wallet it's more attractive. Now if a police car is parked next to your car overnight the chances of it being stolen are reduced. If there were police officers in the police car then the risk of your possessions being stolen are reduced even more. Those factors are called defences. The more 'defences' you have around your car, the lower the risk of its being stolen. So risk is what's left after you've deployed all the defences. The threat remains the same. All car thieves want all cars. All burglars want to break into all houses. CCTV and alarms reduce the chances, but a burglar would still like to burgle you! Alarms and CCTV and locked cars don't change people. It just changes what they're prepared to do.

Assets are threatened, defences protect assets, well defended assets are at very low risk. So let's consider the risks you think there are when you go flying.

You think that bad weather makes flying risky. You probably think that flying in fog is risky, probably think that strong winds make flying risky. You probably think that flying at night or over the sea is risky. But we take into account the threats, defend against them and either reduce or eliminate the risk.

You realise that it would be risky to plug in a toaster and place it on the edge of the bath so that you can have some toast while you're having a bath. I think on this occasion you would be right. I think the risks are so obvious to you that you just wouldn't think about doing it. In other words what you have done is to assess

the threat of electrocution and put defences in place. Does that make toasters unsafe? The toaster is a threat to your safety and becomes risky when you don't deal with those threats. If you use any electrical equipment near water you're risking electrocution, so you don't do it. There are lots of everyday situations that are potentially risky but which are safe because of the way we deal with them. Going about our everyday lives we don't normally think about assets, threats defences or risks, they are just part of the way we live. We get used to situations and devise our own rules for dealing with them. We are all used to health and safety regulations we leave the risk assessment to people who know about the circumstances.

OH! But when it comes to flying YOU think that everything is a risk, everything you think of as being unsafe is in fact just a threat. You call it a risk because you aren't aware of our safety systems or all the defences we put in place to minimise those threats. Do you really imagine that we haven't thought about them? You think that WE don't bother with your safety. Not exactly true ... you just don't think we do **enough** about your safety, you want us to do **more**. Tell me exactly what you mean by the 'more' that you want me to do.

On our fear of flying courses I ask fearful flyers things like, how much **more** fuel would they like me to carry, how much more distance they would like between aircraft when they're cruising, how much **more** maintenance they would like a plane to have, how much more training do they want a pilot to undergo, what testing they'd like a pilot's to have, and so on.

I can tell you now, that of all the fearful flyers I have ever met, NONE has set their standards as high as the ones that exist already. They think flying is unsafe ... well it would be unsafe if those matters were left to them. I have to tell you that I'd be scared of flying too if safety matters were left to fearful flyers.

Now that's not meant to be rude or inconsiderate to anxious people but to understand why they are scared or anxious about flying!

What we do in aviation is to identify all the possible threats to safe flying like bad weather, pilots skills, airport standards, and put defences, processes and systems in place so that they make flying as safe as possible. And so we set limits for flying in certain weather conditions, we test pilots to the appropriate standards and so on. And, most importantly we keep learning and updating our procedures.

When you put your seatbelt on in a car, is it because you're going to drive like a lunatic, or is it a safety procedure ... (a just in case precaution)? In commercial aviation we've got more 'just in case' defences than you could ever imagine. You are our asset, we defend you so extensively that you are never at risk

Lesson Five: Fear and Your Three Brains

For an easy explanation, we've each got three brains: the first works at low level like a reptile, clever-ish but not too smart: The second is our Mammalian brain which is smart but not very adaptable: our third brain, which contains the other two, is our best brain, it thinks and reasons.

But unfortunately, of our three brains, fear engages the reptilian one and by passes the Mammalian and best brain, because it's reactive ... the reptilian brain just does things on the spot. It beats your best brain because thinking takes time. If, if, if you can suppress reacting and have a think instead, a fear is less likely to take hold and it'll limit the adrenaline pumped into your system. Adrenaline helps you to deal with the fear but it also fires up lots of other bodily responses that you don't need when you're feeling anxious (unless you're being chased by a bear or mad axe-man).

Choosing to think of facts rather than reacting to your feelings will keep you in control. It has the added benefit of making it easier to keep your best brain engaged because it's not having to fight off instinctive behaviour. Always keep your best brain working rather than the reptilian one, and things will get better as things get better.

Please don't beat me up for being slightly simplistic ... we don't have much time to get you flying.

What is fear? There are lots of answers to this like False Evidence Appearing Real and though I'm not a fan of slick answers there's a lot of truth in this statement. This bookbook will dispel a lot of False Evidence although personally I prefer to call them myths and misunderstandings.

How does fear influence our three brains?

'Things' make us fearful, things that frighten us are usually things we don't understand, things we're not used to, things we've been taught to be careful about, things like the dark, snakes and spiders.

Things like flying? No the fear of flying is a different fear. Flying is something we've learnt to be scared of. Spiders, snakes, heights, noises are part of our design ... if we weren't scared of them and other dangerous things, we'd probably die out as a species but Flying... we've **learnt** to be scared of flying. Something has taught us to be scared. So now, as you listen to this you should be unlearning some of the things that scare you.

Fear is one thing and our reaction to it is another. Fear causes changes in our body, chemical changes and I'm sure you understand enough about adrenaline that I don't need to say it again now. But as you know

there's something else that goes on when we get a shot of this life protecting stuff that isn't just about feelings ... it's about our responses and our response time.

Before the adrenaline has time to do its stuff we've already had a reaction in our brain. You now know that the lowest brain function (reptilian) will be activated before you even know it. And that'll be the one that makes you jump or react to something. But as I've said that's not the best brain to use because it's reactionary. Its function is to get you out of any 'dangerous' situation instinctively.

Unfortunately in a plane there's nowhere to run to ...especially if you've got your seat belt securely fastened! Remember the 'fear' signal has to travel through the Mammalian brain before it arrives at your thinking brain so ages (maybe half a second) after you've jumped your best brain will at last start to think about what it was that made you jump and what to do about it. Bit late now though (I don't apologise for saying this again because it's so important) because by this time the damage is done.

Unfortunately, yet another confirming message goes into the bit of your brain that stores all the 'I don't like flying information', and the more messages you send into that memory store the stronger the link becomes and the easier it is for your reptilian brain to be alerted by it. And so the reptilian brain will respond more and more quickly as it becomes used to the well worn 'pathway' simply because it requires less and less effort to be activated. These pathways can be controlled, here is an example.

At school we had a science teacher who maintained very strict discipline. One occasion when he was talking to us a boy at the back of the class dropped a glass container, like all school kids we turned around to see what had happened. He screamed at us to "Face the front!" He picked on one boy. "Watson what do you think just happened?" "Someone dropped something sir" "Yes someone did and Watson what do you think it was made of?" "Glass sir" "Yes Watson it was glass how could you tell?". "It sounded like glass breaking Sir". "Yes Watson so why did you need to turn round and see what it was when you were clever enough to work it out Watson?". "I don't know Sir". "You don't know Watson? I know Watson ...It's because you can't control your idle curiosity boy!" And from that day to this, with a few exceptions I have never turned around to such an event. If I'm in a restaurant and a waiter drops a plate I don't look. I never look I don't need to look. And through the years it has become easier and easier to avoid doing. As soon as I hear something a voice in my head says "You don't need to look" and I don't. I have taught my thinking brain to ignore my reptilian brain. I can control my startle response.

The task for you is to teach and programme yourself not to react to bumps and noises. Don't immediately react to things that make you fearful, rather, wait for half a second, think about what it is, and then, and only then choose a course of action as a result of what you THINK, not what you FEEL. Things that happen on a

plane will often be, unfamiliar, unexpected or unusual but that's not the same as dangerous. So there's no need to react instinctively.

One example for you. You're flying along and suddenly there's a bump. Your first reaction will be to jump and grab the arm rests to make sure you won't fall or be shaken out of your seat. What you should actually do is: suppress the immediate feeling, don't react physically but say to yourself, "that bump was probably caused by turbulence. I know that turbulence isn't dangerous...even though sometimes it can be very uncomfortable". Then you should tighten your seat belt and expect another bump. You **MUST** think your way around these situations. Best brain before reptilian brain! Keep tightening your seat belt.

Do the same with movements of the plane or changing engine sounds.

The alternative would be to just sit there thinking that the plane will fall out of the sky and add to all your unfounded worries about turbulence. Myth buster, the plane can't just fall out of the sky.

Nothing I can say will make it more physically comfortable for you. But everything I can say should make you feel emotionally safer. I understand that lifting your feet off the floor in turbulence makes it slightly more comfortable but I haven't remembered to try it yet.

But the choice is yours ... it's not my fault you've left it so late to address your fears, but if you listen to me, trust me and try to do what I advise as much as you can, then the future looks good for you.

Well done ... none of this is easy listening. And it's going to take practice to change the things that you've been doing previously, but don't forget the prize ... freedom from worry and the freedom to see the world.

PS, There is a slightly more up market version of my description here, it's called the executive function of the brain and some people might prefer that style of description, but it doesn't alter what's going on in your head. What I want is that when you become anxious that you don't have to intellectualise, you just get on and do what's needed. Albert Einstein said make everything as simple as possible but no simpler. That's good enough for me.



Lesson Six: You Think of Danger and I Think of Safety

Safety is the word that covers everything that a fearful flyer worries about, it's not unusual for fearful flyers to mention their personal safety as one of their biggest fears. After all if you don't feel safe, then anything that happens when you're flying, however trivial, will upset you.

But I need to check what YOU think safety means? Is the safety you want from flying more than the safety you accept for driving? For instance when you last drove somewhere did you check your tyre pressures before you set off? Did you check the oil and the coolant levels? Did you check the condition of the tyres. Do you know the stopping distance from 120mph ? When did you last read the Highway Code or its equivalent?

Suppose you'd had taken more lessons between your successful driving test and when you last drove, how much safer would you be as a driver? If everyone took driving as seriously as I'm expected to take flying, then the chances of car accidents would be almost non-existent. But I doubt that you'll bother to take some more driving lessons. You're prepared to accept the risk. A risk that you could reduce enormously. But you won't change, you just don't believe the risk. You're no different from most people, you think you're assessing the risk properly but in reality you're doing it because of the availability heuristic. You see and notice the things that come to mind most easily and you make erroneous judgements on that basis. Simply expressed you read and react emotively, more about plane crashes than car crashes, despite the numbers.

Unfortunately you see it like that because driving is something you experience everyday and you see it as normal. But hang on ... I see flying as normal as you see car driving. So who is right about flying?

I'm sorry to tell you, that despite what you feel, despite what you think ... flying is much, much safer than driving a car, now, ... before you struggle with that idea please remember that driving is amazingly safe anyway. Bearing in mind that before setting off on a journey, most drivers DON'T check their tyres, DON'T check their oil, DON'T have regular maintenance, DON'T read the Highway Code and DON'T have frequent testing of their driving skills, relatively few accidents actually happen.

I know that you're probably saying to yourself "my car has warning lights to tell me if the oil level is too low, if the engine is too hot, if the tyre pressures too low". But do you check that your warning lights were working before you set off, if you don't what use are they? I doubt that has even occurred to you to check if warning lights work, you take it for granted. That's why driving is more risky than flying. We take nothing

for granted, we check, check and check again. We do these things to make it safe for you. You know we do checks but I doubt you understand how comprehensive the safety systems are.

So when you think about flying where we DO check the tyres DO have frequent tests DO check the oil and DO have regular maintenance and DO know all the rules, I think you'll agree with me that flying has to be very safe by comparison.

The reason you **IMAGINE** that flying isn't as safe as driving is that newspapers and news outlets love a good headline and it's really easy to frighten people about planes, and as you know, scare stories increase their sales. There's no doubt that newspapers and television publish total garbage about flying. Articles and programmes are littered with speculation, falsehoods and nonsense. The evidence is overwhelming ...this is not just a personal opinion. Even seemingly 'serious' web blogs involved with the travel trade publish stuff that is just plain wrong. Ludicrously wrong. Harmful, inaccurate, sensationalised garbage. They simplify incorrectly and sensationalise excessively. My simple advice is to ignore and avoid this nonsense.

Avoid seeking information about commercial aviation from the internet and newspaper articles. Avoid even looking at them. You'll never discover anything that will make you feel better and there'll always be something that will make you feel worse.

If you want to discover the truth about something in aviation visit my website, Facebook page or Twitter feed where I use the correct terminology, explain things simply and stick to the facts.

An important point on safety ...if you've been instructed to evacuate the plane DO NOT use your smart phone to record what's going on. Leave your possessions on board and follow the directions of the crew.

If you think this an inappropriate statement in a book that is trying to help you to fly despite your anxiety, you are mistaken. As the Captain of a commercial aircraft you expect me to operate within the law and operate my plane safely. I am happy to accept that responsibility but you must accept yours too. The safety of the plane depends upon everyone doing what is expected of them. We have as much responsibility for the safety of each other in a plane as we do for the safety of each other when we are driving. Commercial aviation has a culture of safety from the highest official to the most newly recruited person. When you get on board you are part of the safety system and in accepting this you are taking control.

Lesson Seven: Things Going Wrong

There is almost nothing that can go wrong that the pilots can't deal with. There are checklists and procedures for every possible malfunction on the aircraft, however unlikely the chance of it happening. Engineers and test pilots consider every possibility and test procedures thoroughly before any plane goes into service. On a two engine plane an engine malfunction during take off doesn't prevent the aircraft flying safely and if a problem occurs early in the take off run there's always enough room on the runway for the plane to stop safely. These calculations are made before every takeoff according to the weight of the aircraft and the runway conditions. Aircraft engines and equipment are so reliable that it is only to appease the public that there are any regulations regarding the distance aircraft have to be from diversion airfields when flying over the sea. A washing machine costing a few pounds or dollars hardly ever goes wrong despite years of being overloaded and misused. The engine of a plane costs millions and millions. What conclusions can you draw from that I wonder?

When I ask fearful flyers what they mean by things going wrong they say "anything."

Does that anything include the cabin mysteriously filling up with water as it flies along or a plague of locusts appearing? The only things that can go wrong are the things that are going right in the first place! So what does a plane need that are going right normally? A plane needs air conditioning and pressurisation, electricity for the pilot's instruments and passengers comfort, hydraulic power for the wheels flaps and flying controls and that's it. If it's got two three or four back ups for any of those systems what does going wrong actually mean? Does it mean 'gone wrong and can't fix' it or gone wrong and will put the plane in danger. Take it from me that the pilots can fix anything that, in your words, goes wrong.

If it's fire you're worrying about then maybe you don't know how many extinguishers there are on a plane. There are two in each engine, two in each baggage compartment and a number of different ones distributed in the cockpit and cabin. By the way do you happen to know which sort of extinguisher to use on different types of fire? Do you know how to use your domestic extinguisher? Have you read the instructions on it. Do you even know where you put it? When does its effectiveness expire? What three requirements are there for a fire to occur? How often to you practice putting out a fire?

On board how many crew members do you think know the answers to these sorts of questions ?

In summary

- You need wings to support the plane.
- You need engines to propel the plane.
- You need electricity for the instruments, In Flight Entertainment and galleys.
- You need air pumps to pressurise the cabin.
- You need hydraulic power to operate the controls and wheels.

No less than you need in a car, except we have back ups! Cars don't.

The wings won't fall off, the plane can fly with an engine not working, each engine supplies electricity and there's a battery as a last resort, each engine has an air pump and a hydraulic pump. The auxiliary power unit at the tail of the plane can supply air, electricity and hydraulic power, and there's a wind driven fan that can supply hydraulic power as well. In other words everything is at least duplicated if not triplicated. What else do you want?

There are usually three fuel tanks on a plane and some have eight. Fuel can be pumped from any tank to any engine. What else would you want?

There are two pilots, two autopilots, on long flights there are two complete crews, how many more do you want?

There are at least two flight computers and a triplicated instrument display. Could you reasonably want more? A back up back up system ... yes we've got one of those as well.

If you think that all this means that there's more to go wrong and that more things mean more danger you're just looking for excuses!



Lesson Eight: What are The Chances of Something Happening?

If you're just plain scared of everything about flying the first thing you've got to do is accept that NOTHING is going to happen to you. If I said to you that you won't be here tomorrow because you'll be dead of a heart attack or from falling down the stairs or being in a car crash you'd laugh at me. But that's much more likely ... regardless of what you think. You can't imagine it, because you can't think of many examples of it even though statistically they are very common events.

Not content with the scarcity of plane accidents...you imagine in that rare eventuality you'll be involved in it! People say to me that someone has to win the National Lottery ... well they're right but it's never been them, or anyone they know. If I tell you that you won't win the next lottery draw you'll believe me, but if I tell you that you won't be involved in an airplane accident you won't believe me DESPITE the odds being ten times better.

Statistics don't say something will or won't happen they predict the chances of it occurring.

Anything is possible, I might be the next prime minister I might dig up treasure in my garden, that is possibility. Probability is the chance of possibility happening. Which is minimal in the cases I've mentioned. Then you have to think of the consequences if it were to happen. Would I be a good Prime Minister and would I spend my treasure wisely? The problem for fearful flyers is that they imagine that anything is possible, then give it a high probability, and always make the consequences catastrophic. But that flies in the face of the facts. If things are always going wrong in planes how come nothing has ever happened to me in my flying career? Nothing.

Random things don't happen in planes and if they were to we'd put it right.

Finally what does a one in ten million chance mean to you? That something WILL happen once in ten million times, or that something WON'T happen 9,999,999 times? Our feelings depend on winning or losing. In other words we feel much worse about losing something than feeling good about an equivalent gain. The agony you suffer from a bad flight is much greater than the pleasure you get from LOTS OF good flight. Some fearful flyers feel that if they expect the worse then they'll be safer. If they don't worry then something will happen to their flight. They believe that being anxious keeps them safe. I can honestly say that this is not something pilots need or rely upon. We stick to the procedures to keep safe. If you think carrying a teddy bear or wearing green socks or a following a ritual keeps you safe you're wrong. If it makes you feel more

comfortable, fine take it along do it. But have a plan if you forget them. Always have a plan if there's a change to the things that help you to feel more comfortable. If you prefer to sit on the left of the plane, have a plan in case they move you to the right hand side.

How would you feel if the pilot said the flight was cancelled because he or she didn't have their lucky teddy bear with them? Or that they weren't going to use the checklists because "lucky teddy was in their Flight Bag"?

Remember what I said earlier, I didn't pay any extra life insurance for being a pilot and you know that if an insurance company can wring another penny out of you they will ... but they didn't, despite my job.

Anyway, a short story. A lady phoned me from Canada, she was in tears and so full of anxiety that she could hardly breathe. She was certain that her flight was going to crash. I asked her which flight it was and how she could be so certain.

"I just know ... it's a feeling I have."

"Are you sure?" I asked

"Yes, I'm certain."

"What time is your flight.?"

"10:30 tomorrow morning," she answered.

"And you're certain it's going to crash?"

"Yes, I just know it. I have a sort of premonition I keep seeing 10 30 in my head"

I said. "There's no problem then."

She asked why and I said. "Take the 11:30 instead. You haven't mentioned that that one will crash too!"

"But it might."

"Yes it might, but according to you the 10:30 WILL." After a bit of a chat she realised she couldn't have it every which way. You can't say something will happen and then keep changing the circumstances just to fit it in with your life view.

Everything might happen but most often it doesn't. A chance that something might happen is very different from something that will happen. Possibility isn't probability. And probability doesn't mean certainty. And certainty doesn't mean things would be catastrophic.

She took the 10.30 flight to Miami and back again two weeks later. So much for her premonition! But we can all understand how she felt, the feelings were all consuming, they temporarily stopped her being the normal and capable person that she was all the rest of the time. I haven't heard from her since.

After the 9 11 attacks more people died on the roads, in the USA alone, than ever have died, worldwide, in a comparable period whilst flying. We see multiple deaths as a more likely event than individual deaths, why else would we accept more road deaths in the UK annually, than total deaths, worldwide in aviation.

So that's where we are to start with. It WILL NOT be you ... flying is not a lottery. You've really do have more chance of having a heart attack whilst reading the newspaper than being in a plane crash. It's just that you don't hear about all the heart attacks there are in the world. But it doesn't mean there aren't any, does it?

The next thing is to ask you a simple question. If by the time you've finished this book you get the feeling that you never want to fly again how would you feel? Pleased or slightly disappointed?

If you'd be pleased to never go flying again, stop reading now and go by car, train, donkey or take a boat.

If you'd feel a bit disappointed keep reading because it *means despite everything e ever felt about flying* that you actually want to be able to fly. You know that you could do more things in life if you could fly. Holidays, business trips, trips of a lifetime and freedom. You've admitted that you'd like to be able to fly, but with less anxiety than you have now. Right? That's a very reasonable thing to want. It's just being able to get to that state of mind isn't it? At least you've had the courage to start to read or listen to this book, that's got to be a good sign ... whatever has forced you into it!

By reading or listening to this book there's nothing to lose and the whole world to gain .



Lesson Nine: What do You Want to Achieve?

My next question is do you want to go wing walking or fly with a jet aerobatic team? The correct answer is “Neither.”

There’s no reason or need to ‘love’ flying to that extent! All you need to be able to do is fly with fewer of those dreadful feelings you get before, during and after your flight.

If you’re like most fearful flyers, towards the end of your holiday your anxious feelings might begin as you think about the flight home. If you don’t plan ahead you could be back to where you are now. Your strategy for coming home is the same one that you used on your previous flight. Use the skills and techniques that you learned on the way out.

Don’t waste effort and your holiday fun-time thinking about the flight home until the afternoon before you depart ... and then think realistically. You’ve done it on the way out ...you can do it on the way home ... because once you get home you’re going to see the ‘Fear of flying Dentist’ to fix the pain once and for all, aren’t you?

But why is it harder to come home than to leave to go on holiday? When you are leaving to go on holiday in the back of your mind you can always go home, all that you would lose is the cost of your holiday and the fact that you’ve missed out on something that might have been good fun. It’s very easy to go home again if all you have to do is to go back to the car park get your car and drive away. The pressure of getting on the flight is far less because the consequences of not going are minimal.

When you’re returning it will be much harder to opt out of the flight because getting home would be much more difficult. It might take you days to get home. Where would you stay, which trains and boats would you have to arrange? All those background thoughts put pressure on you and make you think about your flight much more than you would otherwise do.

As it happens I love flying but that doesn’t mean my enthusiasm is something you can catch from me. The love of flying isn’t contagious or a virus that can pass from one person to another. But the fear of flying is, you can get it from your parents and you can give it to your children and you can give it to anyone else you meet. And that alone is a good enough reason to deal with it.

You can inoculate yourself right now from a fear of flying. Get that sheet of A4 paper and write on it all your fears and worries. Get another sheet and place it over as much of the writing on the first sheet as you want. Now write down all the facts, strategies and behaviours that will counter the fears.

You must replace **your** feelings with **my** facts. Not every feeling but as many as will make it comfortable for you to fly.



Lesson Ten: Panic Attacks and Anxiety

A panic attack, however bad it seems at the time will not kill you. It just feels as if it might. But this isn't to make light of it. Panic attacks are awful and all sufferers would do anything to avoid having one. Most people will have a strategy for dealing with them and the best thing to do is to nip an attack in the bud. Stop it as soon as you feel it coming on. Learn a diaphragmatic breathing routine, or any routine that works for you and use it immediately you feel the symptoms coming on.

A lot of people tell me that they don't like the thought of looking silly or making a scene if they have a panic attack or meltdown on their flight. They feel that they might make other passengers feel awkward. My advice would be to forget other people, they're not that interested in you. I doubt that they'll tweet the fact that you're having an attack, and rather than laugh or be critical of you they're much more likely to feel sympathy or empathy for you. You answer to yourself, not to other passengers.

Remember that the crew are trained to deal with a whole range of medical situations and they will know exactly what to do for you. And in case your attack cannot be controlled then you'll become a 'medical emergency' and the pilot will land. You will not be left unattended and uncared for. The airline has a duty of care, they cannot and will not ignore you if you are ill.

Anxiety is a worry about future events and as you know from experience anxiety makes you overthink things. Thoughts go around and around and you never seem to find a solution. You end up feeling tired and you become even more anxious and the whole thing becomes self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling.

There are three simple things that you can do and that you should practise to keep your anxiety levels as low as possible. One is muscle relaxation, another is using a breathing routine and thirdly you need to be able to 'visualise' a place that will make you feel secure.

Having learnt those three techniques it is important that you do them at the right time for maximum benefit. The right time to be doing your breathing routine is at your time of maximum anxiety or stress. For example if taking off concerns you, make sure that you've done your muscle relaxation while you are taxiing out towards the runway so that during the take off you can be doing the breathing exercise. Then when you're airborne you can relax and reward yourself with your visualisation.

If you're anxious about boarding...do your muscle relaxation exercise at the boarding gate lounge and then do your breathing routine as you walk on board. Here are the routines and you should do them in order. Muscle relaxation, breathing relaxation and finally mental relaxation.

Muscle relaxation exercise.

1. Scrunch up your toes and maintain that as you put tension into
2. Your calf muscles.
3. Your thighs.
4. Your tummy muscles.
5. Continue up through your chest and shoulders.
6. Your arms and down to your fingers.
7. Your neck muscles and face.
8. Hold everything in tension for ten seconds.
9. Relax slowly downwards from your head.
10. Relax your whole body for a few seconds.
11. Repeat.

Breathing exercise.

1. Sit comfortably.
2. Breathe in slowly and deeply for a count of five.
3. Hold your breath for a count of two and exhale for a count of seven.
4. Repeat.

Visualisations or peaceful place.

Think of the place where you feel most relaxed and gives you a feeling of safety and contentment. It may be a sunset, a view of a farm you knew in childhood, the sea shore, waves, lakes, ideally without people so that you have the experience to yourself, uninfluenced by people. But it may be thoughts of your partner, children or grandchildren. There are no rules about your peaceful place as long as it makes you feel secure. In addition it's a good idea to:

- Take time-out
- Eat light watery meals.
- Limit your alcohol and caffeine intake
- Get good quality sleep
- Exercise

Remember:

Fear is a reaction to current or future events

Fear is an emotional response to a known or believed threat

Mental Stress is the difference between what you've got to do and your ability to do it.

Physical stress is the toll on your body

Anxiety is caused by worry.



Lesson Eleven: Fear and Turbulence

Fear is an emotion caused by thinking that you are in danger, or exposed to harm.

So far I've been talking about in your head 'stuff' and although you probably want to get on with the 'flying stuff' that scares you it's important to understand what your internal reactions are to your flying fears. Knowing how you and your brain responds to what you consider to be dangerous situations is important because they underpin how you react to flying. If you feel that it's so dangerous that you don't want to risk your life why should you fly? Your reaction would be entirely reasonable. Why would you do something over which you have no control?

And that's an important point, for many people it's about control. What I suggest is that you control the things you can control and leave the rest ... like flying the plane ... to me.

I hope that I can trust you to give up using 'your feelings'. I'm going to talk about my 'flying facts' so that you can understand what's really going on and take control of your thoughts, feelings and actions again.

I'm going to explain to you some of those things that you think are mysterious, inexplicable and fear generating. Like...turbulence

I'd better get on with this subject as I'm sure it's what you've been waiting for. I know it doesn't help you much to know that almost everyone hates turbulence ... even people who enjoy flying but it's a fact. Remember you're not alone by any means when it comes to turbulence. Turbulence is not dangerous if you have your seat belt secured tightly. Most people think that turbulence is about air pockets. There are no such things as air pockets *and that's all I'm going to say about it*. You can't have holes in air!

In the old days, when I was first an airline pilot, I used to dislike turbulence because it was hard to drink a cup of coffee and have a fag if the plane was rocking around! I hesitate to use the word fag instead of cigarette but I was telling someone about this and she burst out laughing, trying to imagine, as she described it, me with a cup of coffee and a 'fag going' whilst flying the plane, all without a worry in the world. (She said that she'd never see turbulence in the same way again). Apart from that, turbulence is to me what waves are to a sailor ... part and parcel of the job. The sea has waves and the air has waves, one you can see and the other one you can't, but they're as good as the same thing. Everyone knows what turbulence is don't they? But just in case I'll explain its causes briefly and simply. Forget air and think of water. I spoke of the

advantages of being able to 'see' air when I explained why a plane flies but to imagine, again air as being thick and visible (we've done this before with the blue jelly idea) rather than thin and invisible removes many of the mysteries of aviation.

Imagine a wide river, in the middle of the river and regardless of how quickly it's flowing the chances are that it'll be smooth. Now look at the river bank and anywhere else where there are obstructions.

There will be jetties, boat moorings, perhaps there may be other rivers flowing into the main river...all sorts of obstructions and restrictions. When the water meets these obstructions the smooth flow gets disrupted and anything floating on the water will bob up and down.

The faster the river or the bigger the obstructions the more the water will be upset. Imagine now that rather than rivers running into each other, think of two oceans meeting, like they do at the southern tip of South America ... well we know the waves and currents around there can be the worst in the world, none of this surprises us because we can see the sea. We can see what's happening. Remember earlier when I mentioned about being kids splashing around in the bath? We 'understand' water. We can feel it, touch it ... we can see it.

All the time we can see water, boats floating on it look normal. But what would we think if water, like air became invisible?

Boats floating invisibly, bouncing up and down and rocking from side to side would look strange and perhaps we'd worry about being on these. Imagine watching people swimming in the sea or in a swimming pool. We wouldn't say they were swimming...we'd say they were flying. Imagine being on the boat and looking over the side as 'nothing' was tossing the boat this way and that.

Would you think that the boat might fall or that the captain might not be able to steer, because if you do, it would be a very reasonable thought ... but nevertheless, it would all look a bit strange, if not downright weird. Imagine watching or being involved in white water rafting! (Imagine being an Olympic diver!) How strange would it be to see things moving without seeing what was causing it.

But then suppose that as you started to get really nervous on these strange floating-in-mid-air boats, the water suddenly became visible again ... and there you are floating, not in mid air but on a nice firm, visible lump of water. You'd stop worrying immediately.

When you're flying sometimes your plane flies through enormous oceans of air that have bumped into another enormous ocean of moving air and as a result you get waves that your plane bobs around on. Think of rivers and currents of air.

But in reality, a plane is a much more stable than a boat. A boat goes up and down pitches into waves gets rolled from side to side and rocks all over the place... at least a plane doesn't do all that. The difference between a boat IN waves and a plane ON turbulence is that we usually say it the other way around: A boat ON waves and a plane IN turbulence. And being IN something is apparently worse than being ON something. Think about it. Then think of these things.

- You can't see the air.
- You think the plane will suddenly fall. It won't I promise you.
- You're flying at 600 miles an hour not floating at 30 miles an hour! So any bump will feel bigger.
- You're nervous about flying anyway!

Not really a good recipe for feeling relaxed.

Imagine a boat sailing above a perfectly flat sea bed. When the waves go up and down the boat will go up and down with the waves. Imagine being on a very fast speed boat and doing the same thing. It would go up and down but the ups and downs of the waves would mean occasionally bouncing into some of them. Now imagine if the speed boat had to keep exactly the same height above the sea bed regardless of the waves. It would probably be off the sea one moment and then it would hit the next wave with a bang and so on as it 'punched' its way through the waves. A plane always has to keep to its allocated height even while it's flying in turbulence. If it were allowed to float up and down with the air waves it might be a whole lot smoother! A plane moves less than half the height of an average room in turbulence.

Another quick point before we move on. There are other ways that calm air can become bumpy air.

On a hot summer's day the sun beats down on the ground and heats it up and as you know solid things like your motorcar will heat up much more quickly than your lawn, this means that solid things like towns will heat up more quickly than the countryside. When this happens a bubble of air over the town heats up more quickly than the surrounding countryside and breaks away, and if the air has a lot of moisture in it will keep rising until the moisture condenses out and forms a cloud. Clouds are not forming all the time of course eventually they run out of energy and dissipate. From these decaying clouds, relatively cold air falls back to earth while new bubbles of warm air float up from the ground into the sky. As you fly along you will encounter this rising and falling air which, depending upon the size of the clouds and the amount of heating

and the amount of moisture in the air make your ride more or less bumpy than it would be in completely still air.

I am sure that you have seen birds at the seaside flying along without having to flap their wings. Usually they are using the current of air that comes in off the sea and hits the promenade or a cliff face and sends the air upwards. When this happens with mountains and landmasses it can cause turbulence. You can feel the effects of the wind blowing against mountain ranges hundreds of miles from them. I have felt the influence of the wind hitting the Alps as far away as Paris.

At the equator the Sun heats the ground and the air rises, this air is replaced with air that is drawn from the North and South poles. In addition to the north south movement of air the rotation of the Earth means that winds go sideways across the planet. When these two air masses collide turbulence is caused.

Finally when thunderstorms develop they suck in a great deal of air from underneath them and when they decay the air falls out of the cloud towards the ground and if you fly in the area around a thunderstorm it will be turbulent, but aircraft are forbidden by law to fly closer than 25 nautical miles to the centre of a thunderstorm. Because it is difficult for you to determine the distance of clouds from your seat they will often look much closer than they really are.

I want you to keep thinking about visible blue jelly like air rather than invisible air..

Fact: Turbulence may be very uncomfortable, but that's not the same as dangerous.

Fact: What you think is what you feel is what you do



Lesson Twelve: Noises Sounds and Seat Belt Signs

The difference between a noise and a sound, is that if you can give a name to a noise, it becomes a sound. So the noise of something on a plane might be the sound of the flaps being extended to me. The bump and clonk noise that you hear is the sound of the wheels being lowered to me. The secret signal you hear from the Cabin Crew inter-phone is the sound of one crew member asking another for another Bacon Roll for a first class passenger.

A noise is a sound that you can't identify, whereas a sound is a noise that you **can** identify.

Noises or sounds are made by

- Engines
- Tyres
- Pumps
- Air Conditioning
- Flaps
- Wheels going up or down
- Plastic overhead lockers
- Crew call system
- Aircraft vibrating when flaps and wheels are down
- Runway lights
- Galley equipment
- Freight doors closing/opening
- Passenger doors closing/opening
- Passengers
- In Flight entertainment
- Airflow around the aircraft
- Electric pumps.
- And Seat Belt Signs

Most fearful passengers see the seat belt signs as an indication of danger. They worry if they're on, and if they're off they still worry but less so. The seat belts are not illuminated or turned off for those reasons. Here's why.

In this era of litigation, one of the things an airline is very careful about is making sure they can't be sued by a passenger or an employee. So the Captain will have the seat belt signs on and off like disco lighting to cover him/herself and the company.

Nevertheless you should always follow the instructions of the crew and if the belts signs are on, you are required by law to put them on.

Because we are short of time here and I want to get through everything as quickly and honestly as I can, I need to let you into a secret, but one that you must keep.

Quite often a member of the cabin crew would pop into my cockpit and ask me if I could "turn the signs on while we clear up." I would oblige, and so when the signs went on the passengers would have to return to their seats and then, unhindered by wandering passengers the crew could get on and clear up the meals and make the cabin tidy. After a while they'd pop back in and say "OK. All done, you can let them out now."

So now you know.

Another quality that fearful flyers have is the ability to predict things by the look on the faces of other people. I refer to the faces of the Cabin Crew in particular of course. If the crew member looks worried or anxious passengers take it upon themselves to use it as an indication of the level of 'danger' that the plane is suffering,

Don't bother ... you can't tell what's going on in someone else's mind by looking at their expressions. If you can, give up your job and become a mind reader on the stage.

Do you always look happy at work? When you go to work do you sometimes think about having to pay your vet's bill or about having your car serviced?

Do not waste your energy worrying about things that you are using as an excuse. Why would they do the job if they're going to be worried about a bit of turbulence or anything else, doesn't make sense does it? So my advice is to stop doing it!

Do you know how to use the seatbelt? Put it on and practice undoing it, I won't explain why but just do it a couple of times before you settle down for the flight. Then put it on and tighten it across your lap as tightly as you can. Settle into your seat and after a moment or two tighten it again, then do it again. Keep tightening your seat belt as often as you can. You will feel much more secure like that.

Lesson Fourteen: Strategies

Do you remember this: What you think is what you feel, and what you feel determines how you behave?

Once you've got to grips with describing things, with the right words and thinking the right things the time is coming when you'll feel better about getting on a plane! Remember that getting on a plane with new ideas new strategies and more knowledge of yourself will be different from the last time you flew. This won't be a question of feeling like you used to feel, you'll be feeling different and you'll certainly feel less stressed, and you'll have things to do that will help you to feel calmer.

I want you to be confident that your next flight you take will be with less anxiety than ever before. You've got to have a strategy and things to do to help you through the flight. Some fearful flyers can manage to in effect, 'hold their breath', or hold their nerve for a flight of an hour or so but on longer flights you need to be better prepared.

If you're flying soon or even listening to this on the way to the airport you've still got time to organise a strategy. A strategy is simply a list of things to do to pass the time in flight, to occupy your thoughts and to distract you at times of stress. So you'll need another piece of paper with these headings: The day before, At the airport, Before boarding and During the flight.

Against each heading you need to write down something that you plan to do to keep your mind off flying. You must change the things that you usually do otherwise you'll end up feeling and behaving like, you usually do.

If you always do what you've always done you'll always get what you always got.

If you've got a smart phone or iPad load it up with videos and music so that you can listen to the things that will help you to stay calm. Make up a play list for different parts of the flight. Make up a play list especially for turbulence and taking off if they concern you more than other parts of the flight.

The thing that I fear most on a flight is boredom so my strategy is to buy as many magazines as I want. I load up with car magazines, computer mags, self help books and all the stuff that I think is scandalously expensive normally and won't buy on principle, so then I feel like a King when I'm on board and somehow the time passes more quickly for me.

There are lots of puzzle books nowadays so load up with those if you're a puzzler. Or look up on your airline's website to see which movies will be playing and decide on which ones you'll watch at each stage of the flight. It may sound trivial but simple things like this have been amazingly effective for thousands of fearful flyers. Have a plan, take control of your circumstances and take control of your feelings.

It's the way to take back control in a situation where you used to have none at all. You have learnt to be fearful and you are unlearning it. Doing the simple things as outlined on this book can help you to unlearn your fear quickly. But it does require courage, it requires confidence and it requires commitment.



Lesson Fifteen Control Again

Like I keep saying don't waste your valuable time and effort trying to control things you can't control ... like the plane or the weather or delays or turbulence. Give your time over to controlling the things that you can control ... like your thoughts and the things you do. You stand a much better chance of succeeding if you do things that way around. What you think, influences how you feel, and how you feel determines the way you behave. And success breeds success. Once you know what to do and what works for you, there's every reason that you'll go from strength to strength.

I often ask fearful flyers if the passengers on board their plane would prefer me to fly the plane or let the fearful flyer. If they still claim that it would be better if they did the flying, I ask if they'd let someone more worried than they are to fly the plane instead of them.

They never do of course. We eventually agree that it's best if they stick to their job and let me fly the plane. Flying planes is my job.

Wanting to be in control is perfectly normal of course, none of us is entirely happy letting someone else determine their destiny. Curiously though, we're happy to give control to a taxi driver we don't know, or a surgeon we've only met twice or a financial advisor with a certificate and a smile. We just get used to the things that you think are more 'normal'. Well flying is normal to me, even if it isn't to you ... you can ask as many times as you like but I'm not going to give you the controls. Go and find something that you can control and busy yourself with that. I know I keep repeating the mantra of controlling the things you can control and leaving the rest to the experts, but having confidence in other people will help you to have confidence in yourself.



Lesson Sixteen Wings and so called Short Runways

Wings generate the suction or the lifting force to get the plane into the air and to keep it there. A wing gets more lift if it goes faster, gets bigger or flies at a bigger angle to the air. We go faster by increasing power, we make the wings bigger by extending the flaps, the third way of getting more lift by flying at a bigger angle which is what we do on take off and when landing. Think of how a swan curls its wings when it lands, it presents them at a very big angle to the way it's going. It gets lots of lift even though it's almost stationary.

The heavier a plane is the more lifting force is required from the wings to support it. If a plane weighs 100 tonnes and the wings are producing an upward force of 101 tonnes it'll climb. If the wings are producing 99 tonnes of lift the plane will descend. If the wings produce exactly 100 tonnes of lift it'll fly level. The bigger the difference in weight and lifting force the more quickly it will climb or descend.

If a plane weighs 100 tonnes and can generate 100 tonnes of lift when it's travelling at say 100 mph all it has to do is go faster than 100mph on the runway to get flying. If it puts some of its flaps down to make the wing bigger it could take off at 90 mph. If it reduces its weight it could take off at 90 mph. If it puts the flaps down and reduces its weight it could take off at 80 mph. These are not actual weights and speeds of course but just to illustrate what I'm saying.

The same applies to landing. The lighter the plane is the slower it can approach a runway

Therefore it's impossible under normal operating circumstances, for a runway to be too short to land on because we'd plan for the weight of the plane to be low enough for it to fly slowly enough to land on what you'd call a 'short' runway. Not that I would ever describe a runway as short, because it's always long enough to land on, otherwise I wouldn't be landing there ... and nor would any other similar type of plane. Why do we fly slower? Because it would take less distance to stop. It's the same as a car, the faster you're going the more distance it takes to slow down.

If a plane can't land at its maximum permitted landing weight then we calculate its take off weight for that flight by adding the weight of the fuel, passengers and freight to the weight of the plane then work backwards to find the take off weight so that it doesn't exceed its maximum landing weight. Complicated? It is if it's not your job. You now have a choice you can either leave it to me or ignore the facts call the runway too short and keep scaring yourself.

It's the same with weather, we have different restrictions for each runway and every airport. I'm not allowed to land if the weather isn't suitable. Suitable to me that is, not suitable to nervous flyers.



Lesson Seventeen Secret Messages

One of the features of anxiety or fear is our raised awareness. The sound of breaking glass at night would make you react very differently from hearing the same sound in the middle of the day. At night or in your case when you go flying you're alert level is at a maximum. Anything attracts your attention, everything has a sinister connotation. The lack of a smile from the cabin crew, a badly chosen word from the pilot about the weather, anything and everything alerts you. Especially the 'ding dong' from the internal phone the cabin crew use to communicate with each other. There isn't a facility on board the plane for the crew to pass secret messages and neither do we have a secret code for secret messages. A bing bong in flight is just one crew member calling another to tell them there's a film star in the first class cabin or that the passenger in seat 16 J is a real pain in the **** and should be served cold coffee or ignored.

If you see cabin crew member rushing past you and deliberately avoiding eye contact ... it's not because something dangerous is happening ...it's because there's a more interesting or more important passenger than you sitting somewhere else.

If that annoys you just press the crew call and ask them for a glass of water. That will keep them busy with you and will remind you that there is nothing going on that they are trying to keep from you and the other passengers.

There is no need to be alarmed. If the crew need to pass important information to the passengers there will be a very formal announcement.

I have considered carefully whether or not to include this next part in this bookbook but in line with my promise of being absolutely truthful to you I have decided to add it.

In the event of a malfunction of a system on board or any action that the captain feels is necessary for the safety of the passengers crew and aircraft he or she will make an announcement broadly in line with the following.

"Will the Senior Cabin Crew Member (SCCM) report to the flight deck immediately", when the cabin crew hear this message they will all disengage from their duties and go to their stations to await a call from the Senior Cabin Crew Member. Who will, as instructed go to the flight deck and await a briefing from the commander.

The captain will use what is called a NITS briefing. NITS stands for the following items. N for the nature of the problem. I for the intentions of the captain. T for the time available before landing. And S for any special instructions to other crew members or passengers.

The SCCM repeats those instructions to the captain to ensure that they both understand exactly what the problem is and how they intend to resolve it.

On leaving the flight deck the SCCM will give the same message to the cabin crew via the inter-phone system. You will not be able to hear this. According to those instructions the crew will prepare the cabin and the passengers for the forthcoming diversion and landing .

The captain will send the same message in the same form to Air Traffic Control who will read back that message to the pilot. These procedures ensures that everyone knows the nature of the problem and how they can all coordinate to resolve it as quickly and as safely as possible.

In all my years of flying as a pilot or passenger I have never heard this message and neither do I know of any pilot who has had to give it to his or her crew.

If you are on board and you hear this message there will be no need to be alarmed in fact you should be reassured that the crew are aware of the situation and that there is a plan of action. Neither is the broadcast of this message a measure of danger or difficulty, it is a part of the normal procedures of airlines.

On a lighter note remember that as a plane descends towards its diversion airfield it gives the crew time to resolve the problem. On a sinking boat the opposite is true. But I say that because I don't feel safe at sea. I am much more at home in the air than I am on the water.



Lesson Eighteen Checking the Weather

I know you feel better keeping an eye on the weather but you shouldn't bother because you really don't know what to look for. If it were easy I wouldn't have spent ages studying for my meteorological examinations all those years ago. Many fearful flyers contact me to say that there's going to be a storm over their departure or arrival airport when they are due to fly ...in a weeks time.

The only weather REPORT, that is of any use, is the one the pilots get before they take off or as they approach an airport immediately before landing. They are revised and updated every thirty minutes. A report is a statement of the actual prevailing conditions. All the rest are FORECASTS. Forecast are what you get on the telly. The weatherman on the telly might forecast that it will be raining when you plan to go for a picnic. When you get to your front door to decide whether or not to wear a raincoat you want to know whether it is raining as you leave the house. That would be a report. I need to know the weather at the time I'm taking off or landing. The only reason I need a forecast is to plan alternative courses of action if necessary, in the same way that you need to know what the weather's going to be like when you get to your picnic area.

If you think about it, the weather on one side of your town or county can be totally different from the weather on the other, so it stands to reason that the weather must be capable of changing over short periods of time. The wind blows the weather from one place to another, if it's raining in one place it'll have stopped raining in another and will start raining in yet another one. That's what weather does ... it moves around, and while it moves it either stays the same, gets worse, or gets better... So what is the point in looking it up days in advance? You'll only frighten yourself because of your ignorance. Unless of course you can answer questions like these.

- What is the minimum RVR for a Cat 1 manual landing?
- What is the maximum crosswind component for a take off on a wet runway?
- What allowances will you make for contaminated runways?
- What is the RTOW?

By the way you need to know the airport and the type of plane involved and, if you didn't realise that immediately you're in an even worse position than you thought. You thought you knew what you didn't know, in fact you don't even know what you don't know. But I'm not mocking you, I'm teasing you as politely and as gently as I can.

Even if you're a sailor or a mountaineer where knowledge of the weather is vital you still won't know what is significant to pilots, planes and airports.

And don't worry about thunderstorms either, despite what you think or think you've experienced, or what a friend thinks they've experienced we DO NOT fly through them. As you know we have to avoid thunderstorms by 25 nautical miles. And don't worry about Fog because we have automatic landing equipment. And don't worry about rain, mist, showers, down draughts, hail, snow, drizzle, sunshine, low cloud, high cloud, strong winds or crosswinds ...we've got it all covered. That's what we're paid for. That's what you pay for!

I will let you watch the telly but you MUST promise to ignore the weather forecasts before you go on holiday, apart from seeing if you'll be able to sun bath or if the snow is good for skiing!



Lesson Nineteen: Your Checklists

As you know a pilots life is governed by checklists and Operating procedures, so to make you feel at home here are your checklists for the different phases of your journey and your flight.

✓ At Home

Practice Practice Practice going into breathing and relaxation techniques at will.

Check the required documentation as soon as you have booked.

Prepare your strategies at least a month before you travel.

If convenient make a trip to the airport to familiarise yourself with the gates and the general layout.

Pre-book your airport parking.

If needed organise an early taxi.

Make sure that you sleep properly before you fly.

Charge your smart devices and power packs.

Prepare mentally for your flight.

Download Kindle “The other Side of fear...A Pilot’sLife”

✓ Travelling to the Airport

Leave in good time.

Fill the car with fuel two days before your flight or,

Order your taxi earlier than you think you need it.

Travel as lightly as you can.

Dress comfortably.

Eat only light meals.

✓ At the Airport

Arrive early.

Check in as soon as you can.

Locate your gate and the time it will take to reach it.

Buy newspapers and magazines.

Find Coffee shop and relax.

Go to your Gate as soon as you can so that you can get a seat.

✓ Waiting at the Gate

Do not worry about the number of passengers!

Do not think about the flight.

Stay in the 'present'.

Use your Breathing and Relaxation routines.

Think about the benefits of taking this flight.

✓ Boarding

Be prepared for a long slow queue.

Have your boarding pass AND Passport ready for inspection.

Expect the boarding process to be slow and anxiety making.

Use your Breathing and Relaxation routines.

Before you sit down get your books, magazines and smart devices.

Put what you don't need into the overhead locker.

If the seat belt signs are on put on your seat belt.

Use your Breathing and Relaxation routines.

✓ Starting engines

Expect to feel anxious.

Say to yourself it's OK to be anxious.

Stay in the 'now' and don't think about the flight.

Expect the lights to go on and off during the starting sequence.

Expect to hear things that aren't familiar.

Remember that the crew may be on their second or third flight of the day.

Remember that this is what the crew do ...It's their job!

✓ While you're taxiing

Expect to hear things that aren't familiar.

Expect the crew to be busy.

Expect the crew 'Chimes' to ding just before take off.

Remember that you might have to wait for your turn to take off.

Waiting to take off does not mean there's a problem!

✓ Taking off

Expect a lot of engine and runway noise.

Expect to feel anxious.

Do your breathing routine.

Remember all the facts about taking off.

At the front of the aeroplane you might hear the runway lights bumping the nose wheel.

Remember a plane flies because of scientific facts not magic!

✓ Climbing

Expect to be in cloud.

Expect the plane to change direction and speed.

Expect it to be bumpy.

Remember what I've said about the seat belt signs!

Do your breathing and muscle relaxation routines.

✓ Cruising

Once you're settled and comfortable do your breathing and muscle routines.

Start the first part of your in flight strategy.

Concentrate on your strategy.

If you hear the engines get louder it means you're climbing.

Remember that a plane can't and won't suddenly stop flying!

✓ Turbulence

Remember that turbulence may be uncomfortable.

Remember that uncomfortable isn't the same as dangerous.

Tighten your seatbelt.

Tighten your seatbelt again.

Remember that you can't stop your tummy from going up and down and that is what gives you the sensation of falling .

Do not try to 'read' the faces of the crew!

If the crew are asked to sit down, it's not because it's dangerous.

Remember the company doesn't want to be sued by anyone!

✓ Descending

Remember the engines have to slow down to start the descent.

The pressurisation might make your ears pop.

You'll be landing about 25 minutes after you start descending.

You'll probably go through some bumpy clouds.

If you do start to get anxious do your breathing routine.

Most fearful flyers enjoy this bit, because the flight is nearly over!

✓ Approaching

Expect the plane to change direction frequently .

Expect the engine sounds to change.

Expect a loud 'clonk' as the wheels are lowered.

Expect the message “Cabin crew seats for landing.”

Remember the pilots are planning what to do if they don't land.

Don't be alarmed if the plane doesn't land but climbs away again.

Do not be alarmed at anything ...this is what the pilots and crew do as a job!

✓ Landing

If it's windy expect a few bumps on touchdown.

After touchdown the pilots select engine reverse thrust to slow the plane so there will be a roar from the engines.

Expect the brakes to go on immediately after touchdown.

After this landing you will be starting start your holiday.

While you are on your way to your hotel the pilots and crew will be taking off again!

✓ On Holiday

Enjoy yourself.

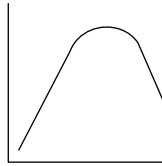
Remember the pilots and crew will be going to work most days while you're holidaying.

Think about how many flights a crew will do while you're sunbathing.

DON'T BOTHER TO THINK ABOUT THE FLIGHT HOME!



Lesson Twenty: The Yerkes Dodson Curve



Along the bottom is your stress or pressure level. Along the bottom is your stress level. Going upwards is your performance level. For a while as your stress increases your performance increases too. Increasing stress however reduces your performance until you get to a point where however stressed you are your performance gets worse.

We remember from being given tasks at school that for a while, the more pressure or stress there was for us to do well the harder we tried until we got to the point that more pressure there was the worse we actually performed. We also remember that with no demand to do well or no time pressure to get our homework in on time we didn't bother at all. So some stress or pressure is important.

The problem for fearful flyers is that they start every flight with a lot of stress (right at the top of the curve) and one small thing, like turbulence or an unsmiling crew member, pushes them over the top and it's hard to regain composure.

We remember from being given tasks at school that the more pressure there was to do well the harder it became. We also remember that with no arousal/stress/pressure we didn't bother at all. So some arousal/stress/pressure is important.

The problem for fearful flyers is that they start every flight with a lot of stress (right at the top of the curve) and one small thing, like turbulence or an unsmiling crew member, pushes them over the top and it's hard to regain composure.

Your plan should be to stay on the lowest part of the curve so that you have something in reserve when you get anxious. Then having had your anxious time, go down the curve again to reset your reserve level. This is the perfect time for your breathing or muscle routines.

Remember that there isn't one big thing that'll fix your fear, it's lots of little things all working together or on their own according to the circumstances. (it's called aggregation of marginal gains).

A top tennis player, will not only score points but will also avoid giving them away. Getting the ball back over the net means that the other player has to play a shot ... and it might go out. Make it hard for the fear to win! Use every attacking shot every defensive shot and never give in.

Use all your new skills at the right time and your anxiety levels will stay low. With low anxiety levels your best brain will override your reptilian brain. Or by using your brain properly you'll reduce your stress levels and be able to deploy all your strategies more effectively. That's a win-win situation.

Focussing on small actions gives a bigger gain in the long run because they're easier to accomplish and, there are more of them. It's like an examination ... you don't ignore the easy questions just because there are harder ones on the paper. Same with your strategies to overcome your fear. Use the easy ones and use them often.



Lesson Twenty-one: Behaving Differently

No doubt you **KNOW** more than you did when you started listening to this. The big question is this: What are you going TO DO differently as a result of these changes? If you keep doing what you used to do then nothing will change. You've got to do things differently from this moment on.

Tell yourself the things that you plan to do differently from now on, write them down and carry that list with you and read it when you feel stressed. Here are four things I suggest as part of your strategy.

Congratulate yourself on any achievement.

Back your judgement ...it's your life, it's your fear, it's your fix.

Remind yourself that everything is success, except giving up.

Set achievable targets.



The Last Lesson

So we're nearly at the end of this short book book and hopefully you're feeling a little better about your forthcoming flight. I use the word hopefully from my point of view, it's not a word that you should use.

I don't want you to hope that you manage or hope that the take off isn't too scary or hope that the turbulence won't be too bad. You can hope all you like but it won't change reality. BUT what you can do is to decide what to do in the event of something making you anxious. Remember you have a choice, you can be intimidated by the circumstances or you can do something about them, and if you've got a plan then you're a lot closer to succeeding than if you don't.

The next thing you must do is to set realistic objectives. If you think that on a scale of one to ten (where one is like me and ten is being paralysed by fear) your fear level is an eight, then you should try to reduce your fear to level seven. If you think you could manage getting down to how I feel about flying, you'll fail. If you think you could manage three, the challenge is too great and you're likely to fail and that will upset you and you'll end up going back to where you were. Set realisable targets and objectives.

The second thing you must do is set markers, a bit like the Restore Points on a PC. Each time you feel better about flying set a marker, a marker that says "this is the best I've felt so far". If you have a set back don't go back to the days when you were really scared, go back only as far as your most recent marker. There's no need to start again.

Think about that mountain and trying to climb it. If you aim for the summit, the chances are you might not make it first time. If you set a target of getting as far up the mountain as you can, each time you climb it, then the chances are you'll succeed each time and at worst your 'failures' won't seem so bad.

And by the way the only failure is giving up, everything else is progress. Finally a short story. Quite often fearful flyers call me from the departure gate and tell me that they just can't get on.

'That's fine .' I say, "No-one's going to force you to get on. But tell me how do you feel?"

"I feel dreadful I haven't slept for a week, my tummy has been in knots I feel sick I keep visiting the loo (bathroom) I'm a wreck."

“Not too good then...” I pause “ So it seems to me you’ve got a choice.” I pause again, “You can either go home and re-live everything you’ve just described to me and be in exactly the same position next time, or...” Pause, “Or you can just get on the flight now and know for certain what the future holds.”

Every person I have spoken to has got on their flight. That’s a very courageous thing to do. Imagine how brave you have to be to do the very thing that has caused you to feel so awful. Getting on the plane is better than going through all that agony again.

That’s courage and it’s an important ingredient for the first few flights.

If you remember at the beginning I asked you to choose a number on a scale of 1 to 10 that described your level of fear. We know it’s not a perfect world so we didn’t do as well as that. We know also that we don’t necessarily achieve the standard that we want. Do you remember I asked you to choose a number that you would accept if I promised I could get you there? I wonder if you have achieved that?

In reality it doesn’t matter how much the number has changed at least you have started to measure it and now you have a way of knowing how are you are improving. That is a very good start in addressing your fear of flying. If your score has reduced by two points then you are doing very well, congratulations. If you have achieved that in an hour imagine how much you can change in the next year. Always measure your fear level on that scale ... don’t keep changing your pass mark. Imagine how you will be feeling in five years. Don’t rush, be patient and never, ever give up.

I won’t wish you good luck because you don’t need luck to fly, but I do hope you find the courage to change your life. I shall be with you on your journey.

THE END

OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO

Get Captain Keith’s book: Fly Without Fear

Visit my website at flyingwithoutfear.com

Sign up to Captain Keith’s Newsletter

