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NOT AFRAID TO FLY, BUT KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS!

SIX TRICKS TO HELP YOUR FAVORITE FEARFUL FLYER

Wouldn't you love to travel with the ones you love? If the idea of flying sends your spouse or partner into a nose dive, you might be used to flying solo. Or, if your beloved vetoes flying, you may experience family trips to see the USA in your Chevrolet, second honeymoons in Minnesota instead of Maui, and class reunions in Maine by train. Maybe your air travel for business or pleasure regularly requires that you fly with a friend or colleague who turns into a completely different person during the flight, making every trip an uncomfortable chore. According to recent Gallup poll in USA Today, 27% of those polled are somewhat afraid to fly and 9% are very afraid. For every fearful flyer, at least one other person feels the impact of this fear.

Statistics don't tell the whole story behind being the flying partner of a fearful flyer. Let's say you manage to convince your fearful flyer to travel with you. Much to your surprise, the rational person you know on the ground morphs into an extreme flyer—extremely obnoxious, extremely anxious, extremely looped

on Xanax, or extremely drunk. Now imagine how many relationships are jeopardized by fear of flying.

If you're tired of flying alone, enduring long car trips, or traveling with an extreme flyer, first you have to understand the fearful flyer's perspective.

What a Fearful Flyer Cares About: While many flyers grumble about increased fares, fewer perks, and less leg room, the fearful flyer doesn't care about any of these. Although flying is undeniably the safest and fastest way to get from point A to B, a fearful flyer focuses only on bad things about flying—and it's not the missing peanuts. Under their flying phobia magnifying glass, rare airline crashes balloon into every day occurrences, a reason they avoid air travel altogether or only in emergencies. Many fearful flyers with control issues cannot hand off the operation of the plane

to an unknown person, albeit a highly qualified pilot. And other fearful flyers just hate the confined space of that long cylinder.

But the good news is that a flying phobia is one of the easiest to overcome. Various simple forms of distraction can help to keep a fearful flyer's mind off repetitious "Oh my! I'm going to die!" thinking. So next time, instead of flying alone, bring your partner along and offer coaching support throughout the flight. Then, pack a few of the following tricks into your carry-on bag so you can pull them out to help a panicking partner.

"IF YOU'RE TIRED OF FLYING ALONE, ENDURING LONG CAR TRIPS, OR TRAVELING WITH AN EXTREME FLYER, FIRST YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE FEARFUL FLYER'S PERSPECTIVE."

SECRET 1: Ask for VIP treatment: Ask to preboard the flight because of your partner's flying phobia. Find out if it's possible to meet the captain. Fearful flyers report that meeting the captain is the single most helpful thing they do that helps them to contain their fear.

SECRET 2: Gaze deeply into each other's eyes: During takeoffs and landings—two things fearful flyers hate most—stare into each other's eyes as long as you can. This focus will be hard to maintain for the entire flight, but for a few minutes at

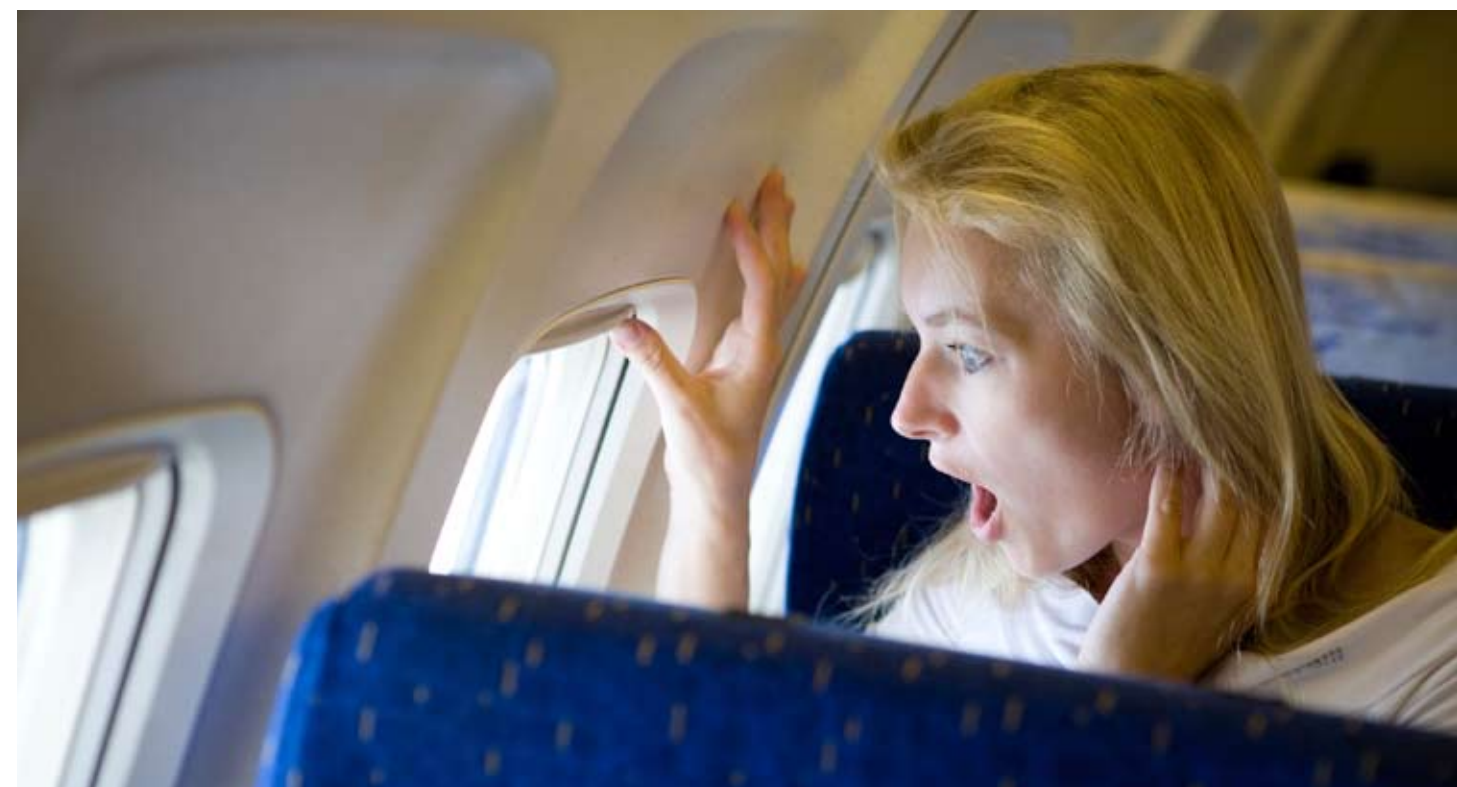
the flight's beginning and end, it will work wonders. Who knows? It may do wonders for your relationship, too!

SECRET 3: Act like a teenager and crank it up! Teenagers obsessed with their I-Pods thrive on loud audio stimulation that effectively shuts out everything around them. This intense focus on an audio stimulus is exactly what a fearful flyer needs. The area of the brain that responds to audio stimulation is located very close to the part of the brain where fearful memories are retained. To take advantage of this automatic "shut out" device, buy your partner an I-Pod or borrow one for the trip. He or she must listen to an unfamiliar audio book or new music at the highest volume bearable. The unfamiliarity of the music or text occupies the mind while diverting thoughts of impending doom.

SECRET 4: Pretend you're a kid in a candy store: Kids love sour candy—the punchier and more pucker power

the better. Pack your carry-on with packages of intensely flavored candy: Sour Patch Kids, gummy worms, or Altoids. Offer your seatmate a Tootsie Roll Pop a few minutes into the flight. When all the candy is gone, have your partner chew on pieces of ice. Crunchiness, like intense flavor, will help to distract another of your partner's senses from fear.

SECRET 5: Coach your swimmer across the English Channel: Early in the flight, ask your partner to hold his or her breath while you time it. Then do it again, but tell your partner to concentrate on certain areas of the body when the brain says it's time to breathe. For instance, focus on trying to wiggle the toes individually. Tense and contract the thighs. Clench and unclench the fists. The key to holding one's breath for longer periods each time lies in focusing on something other than the desire to breathe. This game works with fearful fliers for three reasons: It ticks away minutes of flight time;



it distracts the minds from fears and the idea that they must take a breath now; and it physically calms the breather by slowing the heart rate.

SECRET 6: Act like you're Oprah: Oprah doesn't like flying over water, so she distracts herself by playing games and talking to her boyfriend, Steadman. Oprah also focuses on the purpose of her trip—whether it's a charitable mission or a vacation at her Hawaiian hideaway—and finds this distracting, too. So encourage your partner to concentrate on the positive aspects of the trip you're taking together. Bring along a handheld game or try a Sudoku book—something new that will occupy your partner's mind for awhile. For some fearful flyers, concentrating on reading a book or magazine can be difficult, so bring several selections to allow your partner to choose whatever provides the most distraction.

Send Your Relationship Soaring Sky-High: Fearful flyers come in many forms. Some load up on anti-anxiety medications or a cart full of cocktails. Others feel extremely uncomfortable but don't really know why, so their personality changes: they may withdraw and become unusually quiet or extra-sensitive, or behave downright aggressively to ticket agents, flight attendants, and you. If you've ever wondered why your true love undergoes some mysterious transformation before or during a plane trip, consider that fear of flying may be the problem. Likewise, if your partner doesn't want to visit distant in-laws, it may not be about his or her relationship with your parents. The real issue may be his or her relationship with flying.

Imagine the many pay-offs for you both when you help your favorite fearful flyer overcome that fear. More pleasant and more frequent trips together are just the beginning.

Whether we can admit it or not, we all want to feel safe, loved, and understood, and you can provide that in the air for your fearful flyer. Then, on the ground you'll reap the rewards of an improved relationship—one based on mutual trust and support. **P&P**



~Captain Ron Nielsen, has helped fearful flyers since 1987 with live classes, teleseminars, the "Fearless FlightKit™," and the DVD "FearlessFlight™ Solution, Your Ticket to Freedom." A pilot for 25 years, Captain Ron has graduate degrees in professional counseling and human resources. He has been featured in USA Today, Woman's World, and Web MD and on NBC's Today Show, NBC Nightly News, and Weekend Live. Captain Ron's resources are available at www.Fearless-Flight.com.