

CALM IN THE SKY: A HANDOUT FOR NERVOUS FLYERS

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEAR

- Your fear is normal! Flying anxiety affects millions—you're not weak or irrational.
- Knowledge is key! Air travel is one of the safest forms of transportation. Pilots, crews, and aircraft are held to strict safety standards.
- Turbulence does not equate to danger! Turbulence is common and not a sign that the plane is in trouble. It's like a bump on a road.

BEFORE THE FLIGHT

Learn the Facts

- Read about aviation safety (look up FAA or airline safety records)
- Watch videos about how planes work (knowledge helps counter "fear of the unknown")

Choose Your Seat Wisely

- Over the wing = less turbulence
- Aisle seat = easier to get up and move around; helpful if you are claustrophobic

Arrive Early

- Avoid rushing by giving yourself time to check-in, breathe, and get settled

Avoid Stimulants

- Limit caffeine and alcohol before and during the flight — they can worsen anxiety

DURING THE FLIGHT

Practice Deep Breathing

- Try the "4-7-8" method—inhale for 4 seconds; hold for 7; exhale for 8; repeat 4-6 times to calm your nervous system

Use Distractions

- Bring music, audiobooks, podcasts, or calming apps (Headspace, Calm, etc.)
- Download movies, games, or puzzles before takeoff

Talk to the Crew

- Let a flight attendant know you're a nervous flyer — they're trained to help

Visualize

- Picture a peaceful place or imagine your destination

HELPFUL ITEMS TO PACK

- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Sleep mask and neck pillow (for longer flights — sometimes these are a hindrance on shorter flights)
- Chewing gum or mints which can help with ear pressure and anxiety
- Grounding object (stone, bracelet, or stress ball)
- Notebook or journal (writing can be calming)

IF ANXIETY BECOMES OVERWHELMING

- Try grounding techniques: name five things you can see, four you can touch, three you can hear, two you can smell, and one you can taste
- Consider a short-term prescription from your doctor if your anxiety is severe
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and exposure therapy can help in the long run