



THE HOLIDAY SEASON BEGINS BUT ARE ALL ISLANDERS CONFIDENT ABOUT JETTING OFF HIGH ABOVE THE CLOUDS.

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It is that time of year and most Islanders have holidays booked and are planning their summer holiday abroad. After organising your new summer wardrobe, focusing on getting trim to look great in that swimsuit and anticipating the escape to get away from it all for a well earned break, you would think there would be excitement in the air, and people would be looking forward to their trip to the sun.

HOWEVER IS THIS REALLY THE CASE?

It certainly is for some of us, but with 1 in 3 having serious

anxieties about getting onto an aeroplane, and 1 in 5 suffering from even worse challenges such as severe anxiety symptoms of phobia and even panic attacks, the flying experience can turn some people's holiday into a nightmare.

So why are some people be able to jump on and off planes without a second thought whilst others suffer agony at even the thought of going near an airport let alone the plane? ►

WHAT IS AEROPHOBIA AND HOW DOES IT COME ABOUT?

Many people feel anxious about different situations however a phobia is something quite different. A phobia is completely overpowering and often seems completely out of proportion to the risk we actually face when getting on an aeroplane. Aerophobia is known and classed as a specific phobia as it is in relation to a specific issue in this case-flying.

If you suffer with a flying phobia you will experience irrational thoughts and often will be unable to apply the law of reasoning to dismiss your thoughts and fear. Little comfort is offered by knowing that other people on the same flight are not suffering in the same way as you do.

With some people their fear of flying develops over a period of time, months or even years, of course, the more we withdraw from our fear the worse it can become. In my experience I have seen people that start with a fear of flying, this then develops into a fear of boats and eventually cars, and in some cases people's lives can become very restricted.

Living and working on an island most of us need to fly at some point with our jobs or to visit family and friends on the mainland. It is therefore easy to see how aerophobia can impact on our lives both in our personal lives and professional lives as well.

The reasons and causes for aerophobia can vary from person to person. For some aerophobics the minute the flight is booked it triggers their journey of anxiety and in some cases terror as they are now committed to making that flight. Once on holiday the fear can last with people until they return as most of the holiday is spent worrying about the return flight.

It is not clear why some people carry this phobia and others don't. In some cases phobias can follow another form of illness such as general anxiety or depression. It could simply be a previous experience of a bad flight that stays with them, or in today's world the fear is certainly heightened by such things as global terrorism and the media output of horror stories on-board planes.

The atmosphere on a plane can factor a great deal of anxiety, it is unfamiliar territory riddled with strange noises and erratic movement such as turbulence. The feeling of losing control in such a small space can be overwhelming.

Safety is obviously a major factor to consider, not from the statistics supporting the general safety of flying but the attention drawn to past events and incidents that are brought into everyone's front room by TV, radio, and the internet. In fact it has been proven time and time again, travel by air is by far the safest form of transport, boasting statistics, such as the chance of being involved in an accident on board a plane are several million to 1.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE AVOIDANCE TACTIC

Most people with aerophobia will try to avoid getting on an aeroplane. On the odd occasion they are faced with no choice, alcohol is often used to calm the fear or even prescribed medicine such as valium is used. This may make the flight bearable but will not help in solving the long term problem.

It is important to remember as I have said before, "our imagination is far more powerful than our will" This means that the more we think, analyse, and dwell on our fear the more powerful the fear becomes. So how do we address this fear of flying and what support is available to help us conquer our fears.

BEATING AEROPHOBIA

The first step is to visit your GP and ask to be referred to a specialist that can help you. There are various options available to help you confront and overcome your fear and I have listed the most popular below.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

This type of therapy helps you view the phobia and yourself in a more realistic way and helps you to make changes in your behaviour in ways that will help you to cope.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy helps change your thought processes in the way you internally digest and present your thoughts on the fear.

It works on the basis your feelings are directly influenced by the way your thought processes work with the fear. I.e. change the way you think and you will change the way you feel.

This type of therapy normally demands 20 sessions depending on the extent of the phobia.

DESENSITISATION THERAPY

This type of therapy begins by listing your phobia and over a period of time exposing you gradually to the phobia until your confidence builds and you are able to deal with your challenges a lot easier. An example of this would be to list everything there is to do with your fear of flying.

You may begin by looking at pictures of aeroplanes, followed by a DVD on the safety of flying, and then a trip to the airport to watch some planes take off and land.

This may cause some anxiety initially but this will reduce gradually as you expose yourself to more experiences.

This type of therapy normally lasts between 8 and 25 sessions depending on the client's progress and level of fear.

HYPNOTHERAPY AND NEURO LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

This works in a number of ways. Hypnotherapy communicates directly with your subconscious mind, and in turn reprograms the conscious part of your thinking process to adopt a different and more confident approach to your fear.

It uses the power of the subconscious to reprogram the mind from before the fear began, or positive suggestions of visualisation looking ahead subconsciously to when the fear has subsided.

If you think of your subconscious as the mind's computer, Hypnotherapy simply installs some new software into the mind's computer (the subconscious mind) that can result in the desired changes occurring.

NLP will also teach you coping mechanisms when you are on the flight and can help regain control of your anxieties and associated panic.

This type of therapy normally takes between 3 and 6 sessions depending on the extent of the phobia.

In the next issue of the Jersey Life I will share with readers an example of how Hypnotherapy has helped a Jersey client overcome his fear of flying, and walk you through a step at a time how this was achieved.

In the meantime, enjoy the holiday season whether at home or abroad and if you feel you suffer from aerophobia and would like to overcome your fear give Mark a call to discuss treatment.

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