



## A Message from your EAP Team

February 12, 2021

### Relaxation Exercises - An Essential Tool for Flight Attendants

There are many benefits to being able to induce the "relaxation response" as soon as you begin to experience warning signs of stress, anxiety or agitation. Some benefits include a reduction of generalized anxiety, prevention of cumulative stress, increased energy, improved concentration, reduction of some physical problems, and greater mood stability. Relaxation exercises can be a powerful physical and emotional weapon against life's stressors. Given the events of 2020 and now 2021, being able to invoke a greater sense of calm is a critical skill for Flight Attendants.

#### Tips for Relaxation

Find a quiet space where you won't be interrupted for at least 20 minutes. Turn off the phone and give yourself permission to devote some time to self-care. Research shows that relaxing the body will relax the mind, and vice versa. If you struggle with racing or intrusive thoughts, it might help to focus on the body. If you have a lot of physical tension or pain, it may be better to work on



relaxing the mind. It's hard to predict which exercises will work for whom; it's best to try different relaxation exercises until you find the one that feels right. Remember that you are practicing a skill – like playing the piano. The more you practice, the more effective your relaxation work becomes. It is important to work toward an attitude of acceptance of whatever occurs in your session, rather than growing impatient if you don't achieve a given result. Below are two relaxation exercises that are easy to do in most settings.

### Sample Progressive Relaxation Exercises

#### Favorite Place:

Find a comfortable position. Let your shoulders drop, your arms relax, let your buttocks sink into the chair, let your legs relax, and feel your feet planted on the floor. Imagine a place in your mind that you like. It could be a beach, your room, a forest...take a moment to find that place. If you haven't found a place, don't worry...just keep your eyes closed and breathe deeply. As you are in your favorite place, notice how the air feels, the temperature, notice what you see, notice any smells or sensations in your body as you stay in this place...feel your body relaxing.... just enjoy where you are.... take a moment to notice anything else you'd like about this place... know you can come back here at any time.... take what you want and come back into the room.

## Breathing and Centering:

- 1) Take two to three deep and even breaths.
- 2) Visualize the word "*relax*" in a calming color
- 3) Think this calming word to yourself as you continue to breathe deeply:  
Breathe in...think "*relax*"; as you breathe out think *relax*  
*PAUSE*  
Breathe in...think *relax*; as you breathe out think *relax*  
*PAUSE*

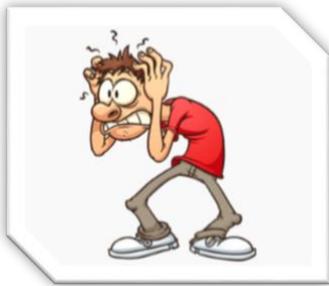


Be aware of how your body feels at the PAUSE. This is the “centering” piece. Feeling centered means you are feeling calm and focused. Now breathe 8 more times, slowly and deeply.

## What’s the Difference Between a Fear and a Phobia?

Phobias come in many different forms. Acrophobia is the fear of heights. Trypanophobia is the fear of needles. Hodophobia is the fear of traveling. Phobias are one of the most common mental health disorders with 11% of people experiencing at least one phobia over her/his lifespan. So, what is the difference between a fear and a phobia?

Fears have a protective purpose. They make us alert to danger and prepare us to deal with it. Phobias involve the experience of persistent fear that is excessive and unreasonable. A fear of being hit by lightning during a thunderstorm will result in most of us leaving the beach when a thunderstorm pops up. Most would call this a reasonable, if not healthy fear. Once the thunderstorm clears, we go back onto the beach. Those with a phobia about being struck by lightning, which is called astraphobia, may find it difficult to even venture outside with a concern that a thunderstorm could pop up anytime. The key to distinguishing a fear from a phobia is whether the person is physically and/or psychologically impaired by her/his worry. In short, a phobia is a fear of being afraid. It results in a person limiting or eliminating normal life activities just to avoid the triggering object or event.



Most people generally don’t seek treatment for phobias. Only 6% of people with a phobia ever go in for treatment. This low treatment rate is due in part because those with a phobia are not totally disabled by it. Many are able to successfully create routines to avoid their trigger(s). Not before a person's phobia is extremely severe or life limiting does one typically seek help.

Even though phobias can be very disabling and downright exhausting, the great news is that phobias in children, adolescents and adults are also very treatable. If you’d like confidential assistance with a phobia or other anxiety disorders, call one of your local EAP committee members. Their contact information can be found at [HawaiianAFA.org](http://HawaiianAFA.org) or through the AFA EAP Helpline at 1-800-424-2406.