

# **The use of a simulator for the treatment of the fear of flying**

*Taming the airplane*

**a program by Captain Noël Chevrier  
and Marie-Claude Dentan**

**(Air France, 1993)**

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# The use of a flight simulator for the treatment of the fear of flying

- **Diagnosis : the different groups of stressed passengers**
- **Training programme : half-day course**
- **Results**



# The diagnostic procedures

- A questionnaire aimed at examining the reasons and measuring the level of the fear of flying.
- Then, a deep interview with a psychologist.
- We distinguish several « families » of stressed passengers.



# Families of stressed passengers

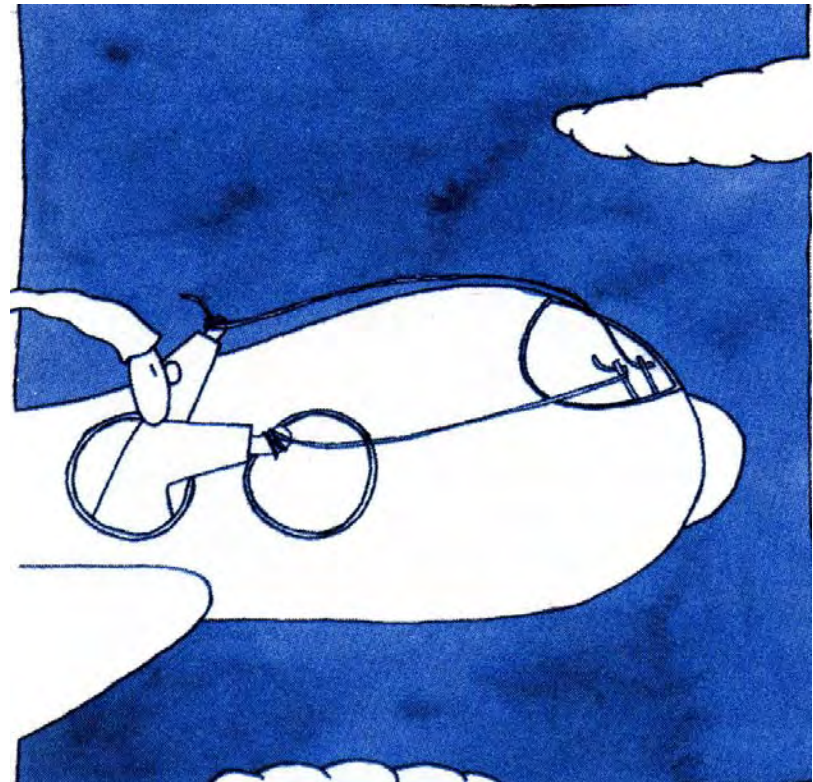
## *The Earthlings*

- Do not understand how a huge air craft can leave the ground.
  - *A machine heavier than air simply cannot fly .*
  - *There is something magical and somewhat dangerous about flying .*
- ☰ **☞ No psychological problem with them. They need knowledge.**



## ***The Decision-makers and Overworked managers***

- **They do not like delegating responsibilities. In the plane, they suffer anxiety about of their loss of control over events.**
- **And also ...too much stress.**
- ☛ **They must learn how to better manage their stress as a whole**



# **Families of stressed passengers :** **The ones who suffer from airplane phobia**

- **They need cognitive restructuring and gradual exposure.**
- **Simulator is very useful for this step-by-step exposure.**



**Families of stressed passengers :**  
**The ones who went through a shock related to flying**

**It is P.T.S.D.  
consequence.**

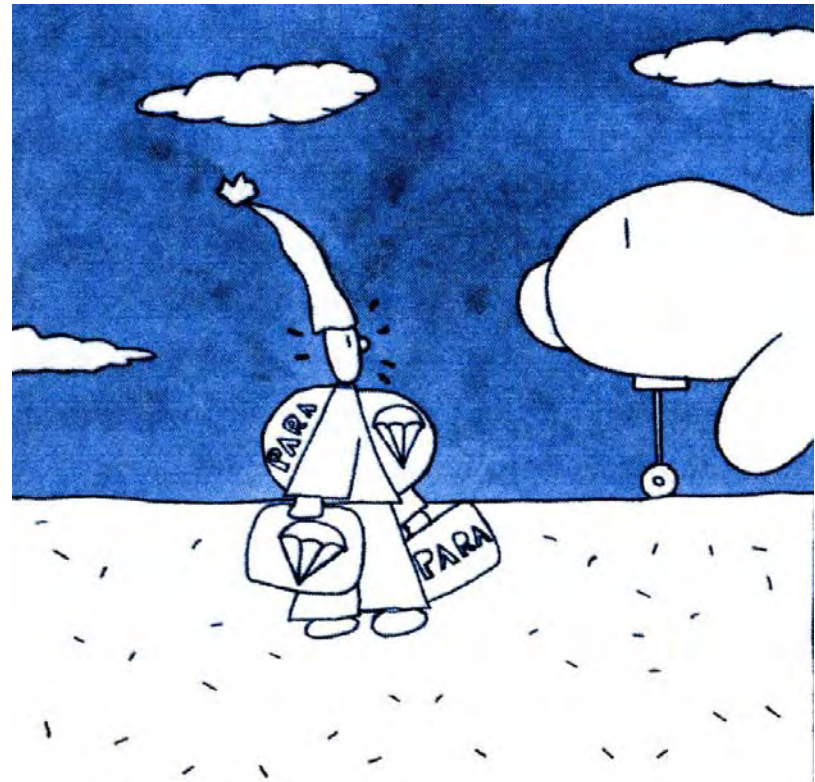
**The memory of a past  
stimulus distorts the  
perception of the  
actual flight**

**They need « to cut » the  
association plane  
equals danger.**



## **Families of stressed passengers :** **Those who suffer intense anxiety**

- **However this programme is not efficient for those who suffer intense anxiety with all its adverse effects in the different aspects of their life.**

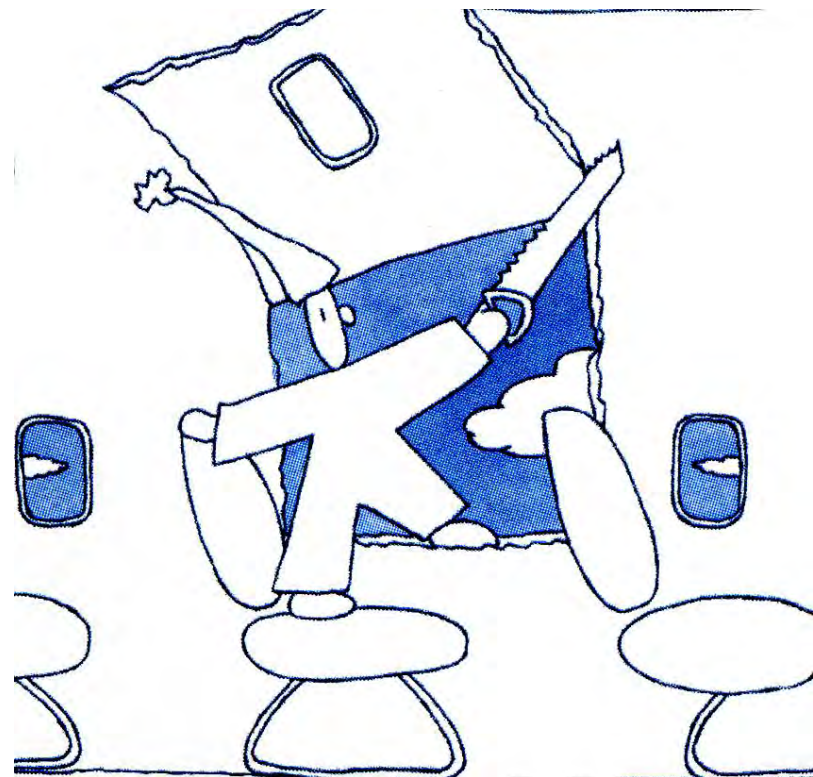




# Families of stressed passengers :

## Agoraphobic

- **Agoraphobic is a different problem**
- **They will need to follow a therapy.**
- **We refer them to specialists.**



# *How to tame the aeroplane* a half-day course

- **Session on how to manage in-flight stress**
- **Introduction to aeronautics with the pilots**
- **Simulator session**



# 1 How to manage in-flight stress

- **What stress is ?**
- **What anxiety is ?**
- **Everybody has a breakpoint.**

*You must know your stress limits.*

- **Coping stils and learning how to relax.**



## 2 Aeronautics

- Pilots describe the laws of aeronautics, airline navigation, turbulences and everything about flying, from take-off to landing.



# Factors that trigger more stress

- Mechanical features
- Take off
- Turbulence
- Bad weather conditions



*Why do its wings move ?*



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# 3 Simulator session

- **The trainees will fly over oceans with storms and experience mechanical failures.**
- **The pilots can copy every possible situation.**
- **The trainees can re-experience the stages of the flight that give them more anxiety.**



# A warm welcome for a stress-free flight

- **If they inform the anti-stress in advance, the crew is advised**
- **They will receive special attention on their next Air France flight.**





# A practical guide

## *How to overcome the fear of flying*

- **Read a practical guide**

➔ **No more mystery.**



# *Taming the plane*

## What about the Results ?

- In 50% of cases, fear of flying disappears completely....



# *Taming the plane*

## **...What about the Results ?**

- **35 % are not completely over their fears, but feel more able to manage their remaining stress.**
- **For 10 %, course was too short. They need complementary help (an other training or brief therapy).**
- **5% no news.**

# Conclusion

- **The flight in a Simulator is very useful. It shows a significant clinical interest.**
- **It allows a natural and progressive immersion.**
- **But to ensure a successful session, what is most important : approach the course with positive attitude.**



*I know now, we are in good hands.*

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