

Cognitive - behavioral treatment for fear of flying in Iceland

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“Enjoy Flying”

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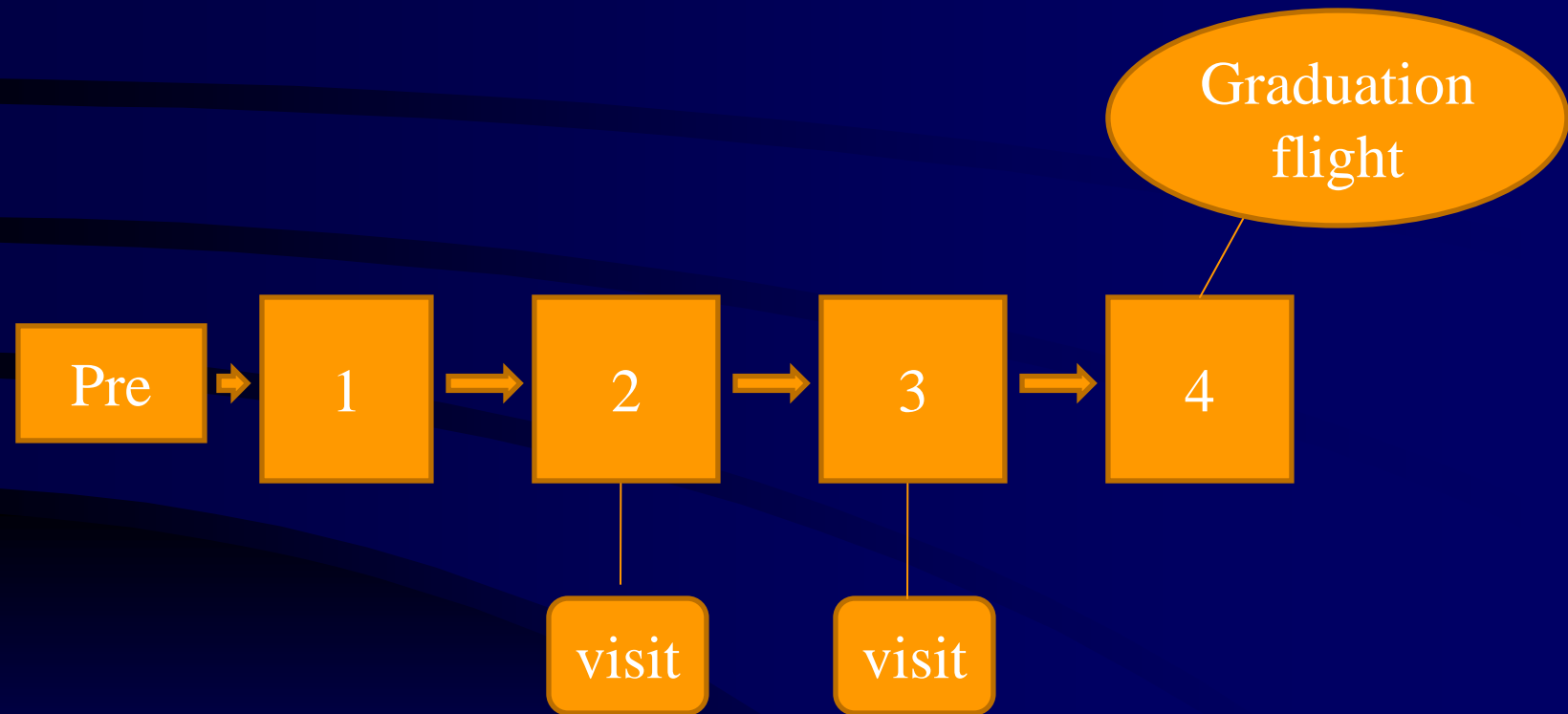
Flight captain Pall Stefansson

Sponsored by Icelandair

Assessment process

- Two questionnaires Flight Anxiety Situation (FAS) and Flight Anxiety Modality (FAM)
- Applied in every session of the course, during the flight and after six months

The treatment plan



Each session of the course is a combination of:

- Behavioural methods to deal with fear
- Cognitive methods: getting to know your thinking pattern and how to modify it
- Information on flying, safety and weather conditions

Session one

- A short lecture on phobias
- The participants share their experience
- Progressive relaxation is introduced
- Flight information:
 - Principles of flying and aerodynamics
- Homework assignment:
 - Relaxation training

Session two

- Relaxation exercise, diaphragmatic breathing
- Flight information:
 - Weather, types of airlines, air-traffic rules, safety measures
- Thinking and cognitive processes:
 - Wrong interpretation leads to and provokes fear when flying

Session two

- Visit to air-traffic control centre
- Homework assignments:
 - Relaxation training continued
 - Make notes on internal dialogue when anxious

Session three

- Applied relaxation:
 - Breathing and hyperventilation
- Flight information:
 - Pilot training, aircraft maintenance etc.
- Cognitive restructuring and change:
 - Safety behaviour

Session three

- Visit to the airport, embarking an aeroplane,
- Homework:
 - Relaxation continued
 - Tasks on cognitive restructuring and safety behavior

Session four

- Relaxation report - cue controlled relaxation
- Thought stopping
- The flight trip systematically described from A to Z
- Decision making and determination
- Homework assignment:
 - Relaxation training, reading instructions and practicing thought stopping

The graduation flight

- Regular international flight from Keflavik
- Back and forth on the same day
- Each way is 2.5 to 3.5 hours
- Trip amounts to 12 hours including transfer to airport and transit waiting
- Course leaders stay with the group the whole trip

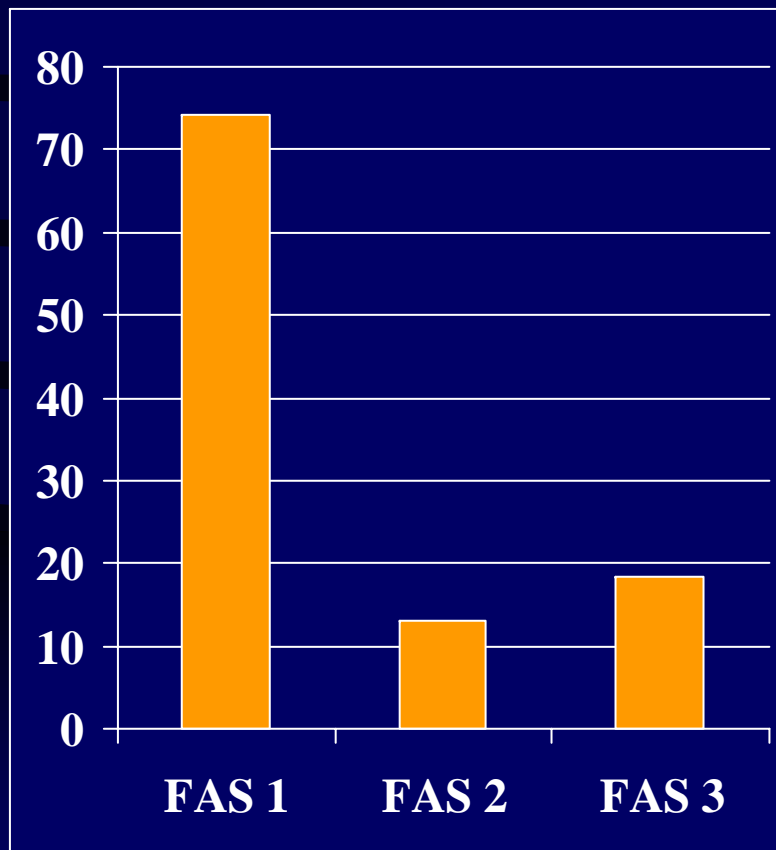
6 month evaluation

- Feed back on the treatment program
- Number of flights in the 6 months
- Answering FAS and FAM questionnaires

Participants of the course

- 206 completed the course, 156 women and 50 men
- 174 answered in the follow-up or 84.5%
- Age range 16 to 73

Flight Anxiety Situation



FAS 1 initial test

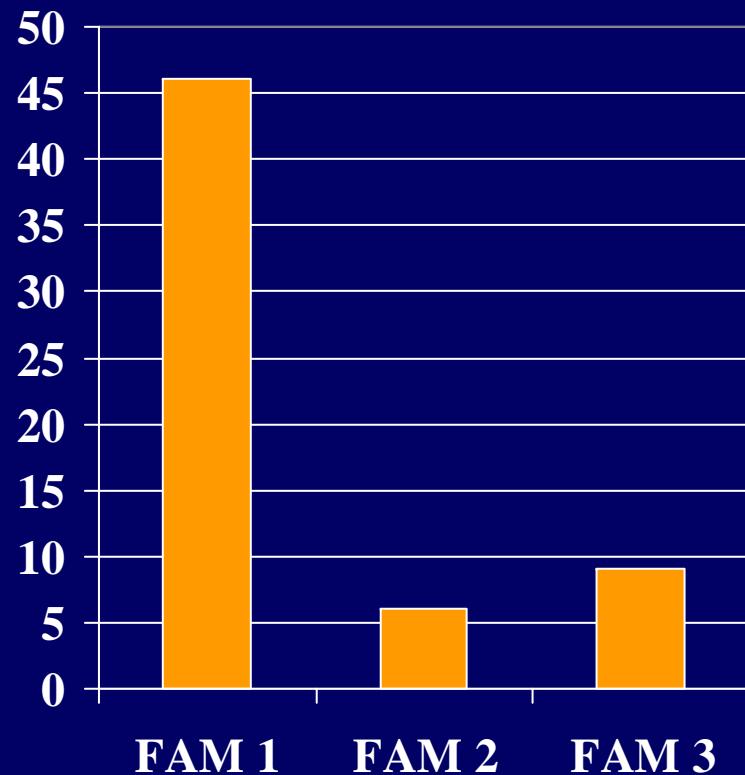
FAS 2 graduation flight

FAS 3 after six months

Flight Anxiety Situation

- Decrease of flight anxiety from initial test to graduation flight: 61 points
95% confidence interval 55.5 - 66.5
- Decrease of flight anxiety from initial test to six month test: 55 points
95% confidence interval 47.7 – 62.3

Flight Anxiety Modality



FAM 1 initial test

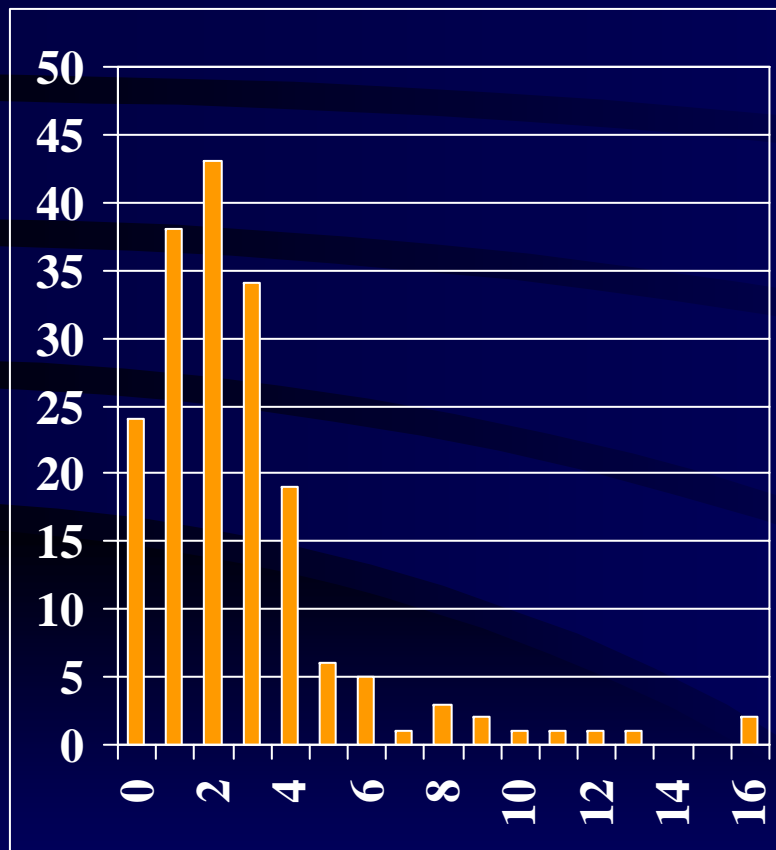
FAM 2 graduation flight

FAM 3 after six months

Flight Anxiety Modality

- Decrease of anxiety symptoms from initial test to graduation flight: 40 points
95% confidence interval 37.9 – 42.9
- Decrease of anxiety symptoms from initial test to six month test: 37 points
95% confidence interval 34.8 – 39.9

Number of flights in the six month period after the course



- 88% had made one or more flight trips
- 64% had made two or more flight trips

Comments and reflections

- Who are attending the treatment?
- Who did not finish the course?
- Are concomitant phobias important?