PRE-FLIGHT CHECKLIST FOR ANXIOUS FLYERS

Fly Above Fear

A pre-flight checklist is a simple, structured list that breaks preparation into clear, manageable steps. Using the pre-flight checklist provides focus, increases your sense of control, and helps prevent anxiety from spiralling.

You don't need to do everything perfectly — this checklist is here to support you, not pressure you.

The day before your flight

- Confirm travel documents (passport, boarding pass, insurance).
- Pack essentials in your carry-on (headphones, snacks, comfort item).
- Download calming apps, playlists, or podcasts for the flight.
- Note down coping strategies (breathing techniques, grounding exercises).
- Set realistic expectations: remind yourself turbulence is safe, and discomfort is not danger.

On the day of your flight

- Eat something light but filling before leaving for the airport.
- Hydrate (bring an empty reusable water bottle to refill at the airport).
- Leave extra time for travel to avoid last-minute stress.
- Wear comfortable clothing (layers help with cabin temperature changes).
- Keep your checklist accessible to tick off as you go.

At the airport

- Check in or drop your bag early to reduce waiting-time anxiety.
- Walk or stretch to release tension before boarding.
- Use grounding techniques in the terminal if anxiety spikes (5-4-3-2-1 method).
- Remind yourself: thousands of flights take off and land safely every day.

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IN-FLIGHT CHECKLIST FOR ANXIOUS FLYERS

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During boarding

- Find your seat, settle in, and arrange your space (comfort item, headphones within reach).
- Do a short breathing exercise while passengers board — this prevents anxiety building before take-off.
- Remind yourself of your plan: what you'll do during take-off, turbulence, and landing.

In-flight

- Use distraction techniques (book, podcast, film) during take-off and turbulence.
- Practise breathing or mindfulness when you feel anxiety rise.
- Stay hydrated and snack regularly to keep blood sugar balanced.
- Record thoughts and feelings in your diary (if using one) to track CBT progress.

Practical tips for a calm flight

- Start early: Don't wait until you're stressed at the airport. Use the checklist the night before.
- Be realistic: If a task feels too big, break it down further (e.g. "pack carry-on" becomes "pack snacks," "pack headphones," etc.).
- Use positive reinforcement: Each tick is progress. Say to yourself, "That's another step closer to calm."
- Review post-flight: After landing, note which steps helped most. This builds confidence for your next journey. You're making progress!

How to use this checklist

- **Print the PDF:** Keep a hard copy in your bag so you can tick items off with a pen.
- **Save the online version:** Access it on your phone or tablet if you prefer digital.
- **Personalise it:** Add your own rituals or comfort items (lucky charm, favourite snack).
- **Pair with other tools:** Use alongside our breathing guide or diary template for a complete toolkit.

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