

Q: After enduring all the airport check-in delays, and then further delays as the airplane sits on the runway too many times, my temper gets more tested every time it happens. Other than kicking out the window and running back to the terminal, what can I do to try to calm down?



A: Violent escape out the window may seem like a good idea during the worst of the wait, considering that the air conditioning will be off and you're sweating like an indicted Illinois governor. However, there are more peaceful ways to pass the interminable time. Here are some suggestions:

If permitted, take brisk strolls up and down the aisle for several minutes. It can alleviate the inertia of being stuck in a cramped seat, and maybe ease a bit of the frustration.

Also, if permitted, and there's a fairly large empty area, such as near the rear hatch or galley, go there and do some standing and stretching exercises. Do pushes against a bulkhead (not the hatch!) with one or both hands, also lifts with one foot or knee up at a time. If fit enough and not restricted by clothing and space, do a series of squats and push-ups.

One of the marvels of modern science for flight-delayed passengers is the little personal electronic-digital gizmo, such as the laptop, iPod, video cell phone, CD and DVD player and other tiny toys for big people. However, too many of us who've hit age 55 and beyond are not as handy with them as our five-year-old grandkids.

So, anticipating more delays in your future air travels, get yourself experienced in the technology and take along one of those handy little do-it-all boxes. While you wait to get off the ground, you can work on business projects, write reports, solve puzzles, watch movies, listen to music, converse on the phone, read on-screen books, play games, send letters and do scores of other things to help pass the time.

Of course, for those greying relics who don't have the magic electronic doodads and are too ancient to work them, there's always the old-fashioned way of passing the waiting time. Take along a paperback book or two you've been meaning to read. If the delays last long enough, you may be lucky enough to be able to read them through without interruption.

Our favorite way of making waiting time go more quickly is to take with us a stash of crossword puzzles we've clipped over the months from our daily newspaper. If you try concentrating on them, you'll be amazed how the long hours of delay zip by as if they were merely three-quarter-hours.