

We often get this question, and it bothers us. First, we sympathize with people who must carry all that weight around everywhere, not just while traveling. And the ridicule they're always suffering from others.

On the other hand, let's do the math on the question of whether airlines should be charging more for overweight airline passengers. A 150-pound person pays \$150 fare for a flight, and occupies one seat on the airplane. Next in line, a 300-pound passenger pays \$150 for a flight and takes up two seats. Therefore, by simple logic, why shouldn't the overweight passenger pay double?



Anyhow, even if the overweight passenger doesn't quite fill up two seats, what about the inconvenience and crowding that person causes anyone unfortunate enough to be in an adjacent seat? Therefore, even if the overweight passenger doesn't quite fill two seats, let's allow the extra fare to be negotiable from double the price to something less. Shouldn't that grossly heavy person pay something for the pain and suffering inflicted on others. A regular airline ticket implies a passenger has the right to occupy one seat, but not that he/she must share it with the next person's overflowing body.

Many people feel the ordeal actually can cause real pain and suffering. Ask anyone who has been stashed between overweight passengers in a three- or five-across row of sardine-can seats on an eight- or more-hour, non-stop cross-country or overseas flight.

Is it really unfair about beginning to charge additional fare for overweight people? Why not? When luggage is checked in, there's an extra fee if it weighs more than the maximum allowed. In fact, many airlines are now charging for all luggage, regardless of weight. Why shouldn't they also charge extra for heavier weights in some of their seats?

Another benefit of charging extra for overweight passengers is that it may cause the people involved to begin those long-delayed weight-loss programs they've too often abandoned. The incentive will be strong for that 300-pound person to knock off some of those pounds, get healthier and set a goal to get trimmer, while at the same time save some travel dollars. Another benefit, which can bring smiles of pleasure to all TV watchers, is that hawkers of those obnoxious infomercials about diet pills and magic weight-loss programs may go broke and off the air.

We have no personal gripe against overweight people. They may consider the extra charge to be grossly unfair, and certainly have the right to fly for the same price as anyone else. And they should be able to do it, just as long as they don't sit next to us on our next non-stop flight from Los Angeles to Hong Kong.