

All too frequently there are horror stories of air rage in the daily news media. A man refuses to buckle his seat belt and verbally attacks a flight attendant. A woman insists on smoking in the bathroom, locks herself in and refuses to come out. A drunk gets sick or passes out. A fight starts when one passenger stumbles over feet blocking the aisle. An unruly man attacks a flight attendant for no apparent reason. If you're in the middle of such troubles, what can you do?

Flying has become a frustrating experience because of the tight security and unending fears of terrorism. Many passengers are already nervous and resentful even before flights take off. Additionally, the sardine-can seating of five across on long flights is enough to try the patience of the most even-tempered person. So, what can you do when the guy in the next seat goes ballistic?



An important factor in most cases of air rage is booze. The normal passenger frustrations are heightened when flights are delayed, and people seek to ease their troubles in airport bars, sometimes for hours. Additionally, on some flights, continuous free or for-pay drinks are served by flight attendants. Drunks on flights are just as unruly as they are after all-night binges at neighborhood bars, and much more dangerous when they rage in the cage within the confined cabin of an airplane.

What can you do when you're faced with situation of air rage? If there's an advantage to such an insane happening, it is that you can usually see indications of it developing. First, you'll be able to smell trouble coming. A person who has been drinking excessively in the airport bar gives off a strong odor of alcohol. The long-time alcoholic carries a deeper, permanent odor on breath, skin and clothing. Troubles may start with mumbles of discontent. Then, the cursing of the airline, flight attendant, rising ticket prices and, of course, shouts about real and imagined terrorists who cause all the delays and frustrations of flying.

If this disturbed person is sitting nearby and you feel uncomfortable, get up, go to the flight attendant and ask to change your seat. If you're traveling with a child or very elderly companion, insist that your seats be changed because you fear there may be danger to them. Don't make a big fuss or trade anger for anger. Just get away from the growing disruption.

If a passenger seems to be beginning an all-out fit of rage near you, make sure the flight

attendant is made aware of it immediately. Don't argue, curse or criticize the unruly passenger. Unless there's actual physical danger to you, flight attendants or others, don't try to physically restrain the unruly passenger. If the rage is directed at you, get up and walk away. If followed, get to a bathroom, go in quickly and lock the door.

Because air rage incidents often cause flights to be diverted to nearby airports, and thus disrupting schedules, you and other passengers could be furious with the disruptive person. However, even if the rage has subsided and the person is restrained, don't let your own anger and frustration tempt you to hit or otherwise abuse the person. In many cases, later information reveals the passenger was not drunk, but had a history of mental illness.

When confronted with a situation of air rage, keep calm, be sure you and your companions are safe, and stay as far away from the disruption as you can get within the aircraft cabin.