

Flight to darwin, number 3105, now boarding

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White knuckles, sweaty palms, this single seat in a line of 9 is my only safe zone, all of five minutes and we are inseparable. This aching fear, holding me down to my seat, my safe zone. Final call for flight number 3105 to Darwin. This was the day, this was the time, and this was the place where I came face to face with my biggest fear. Glued to my seat, I thought why? Why am I so afraid? Why am I sitting here, in an airport terminal unable to move from this relatively uncomfortable, plastic seat?

It's not right. I look to my surrounding, fellow flyers. Children, the elderly, mothers and fathers, all willingly ascending from their relatively uncomfortable seats, to board a completely reliable aeroplane. Such a miniscule task in one's life journey, and I can't even stand up. A crippling fear of flying has left me without dignity and courage, ashamed and embarrassed. But my thoughts are interrupted by the comforting sound of one of the flight attendants. " Sir? " she says, " is everything ok?

Your flight is here for you", a speechless reply on my behalf indicates that im not ' ok', parking herself on the seat next to me she utters, " there's nothing to be afraid of, the skies are blue, no winds in sight, a simple, scare-free trip". ... " Im trying, I really am, but I just can't work up the courage to get up and board that god damn plane" I attempt to explain. She returns with " Nelson Mandela once said that courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.

The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear". I don't know what happened there and then, but a strong epiphany occurred in that infant mind state I was entranced by, I wasn't without

courage because of my fear of flying, I was without courage because I wasn't doing anything to overcome that fear. " For a flight attendant, you are one wise woman" I proclaimed to her. She just smiled at me and walked on to the plane, as if she knew I would follow her steps.

Three deep breathes, to calm myself and double as a countdown as I rise. Stand up, chin up and smile from ear to ear. What seems like such a small achievement to most, a small step in a day to day activity, was an accomplishment of immense proportions for me. Forwarding to the gates of the plane, I get my ticket scanned, and travel down the seemingly elongated tunnel connecting to the side of the plane, greeted by the wise attendant; I embrace her luminescent, comforting aura and place myself into my allocated seat.

A somewhat comfortable seat, leather exterior, cushioned interior, cup holders, earphone input, foodtray and pillow. A reassuring safety speech enlightens the paranoia. The pleasant smiles beaming from the flight attendants render that this trip will be like any other average trip; no interruptions, no problems, no worries. But the slightest of fear was still sneaking through my mind, past the comforting seats, past the safety speeches, and past the wise flight attendant, and the clenching noise the doors made as they sealed closed only boosted fear through my veins.

At that point in time a few traditional deep breathes were my only remedies I could think of, but not nearly enough. This time though, I was a wiser man, recalling what the flight attendant quoted. " Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel

afraid, but he who conquers that fear. " Replaying it over and over in my head, like a broken record. Courage is not the absence of fear..." And on and on... Until I looked to the front of the plane, chip up, a few more deep breathes and smiled... An hour and I half later, no interruptions, no problems, no worries. I walked off that plane, proud. A feeling like never before, a feeling of true courageousness. And standing there just outside that Darwin Airport in the taxi zone, I thought about how this is my new safe zone, my serenity until a new challenge awaits, however great or miniscule it may be, it is nothing compared to the courage of one's soul.