

Dr. Blume's Article of the Month

World Famous Pilot Treats Fear of Flying

by Ginger E. Blume, Ph.D.

Middletown psychologist, Dr. Ginger Blume, has more than a doctoral degree to her name---she's also a pilot. She made her first solo flight in a Piper Cherokee aircraft at the age of 16, obtained her license at age 17, and became the world's youngest female, twin engine pilot, at age 18. Before attending college at Vanderbilt University, Ginger Blume was delivering Piper airplanes to various European airports from the Piper headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Despite the excitement of working in Europe, she couldn't wait to begin college and pursue her love of psychology.

Dr. Blume wants to help others with their fear of flying become more comfortable when they need to fly. Her understanding of flight and psychology, provides her clients with a unique opportunity to overcome their fears. She estimates that approximately 35 million people don't fly and very few people, maybe one in six, are totally comfortable with flying. In fact, the fear of flying is one of the most common fears in this country and in the world.

The fear of flying develops from numerous causes that must be carefully assessed for any treatment to be effect. Dr. Blume feels it is generally difficult for the public to believe that flying is safer than driving a car when plane accidents provide dramatic visual impact on all of us in the media. Like any fear or phobia, people can overcome their fear of flying when offered the right information and treatment. If a person is highly motivated to overcome their fear, have the ability to trust others, and are willing to spend time practicing relaxation strategies, the chances of success are good.

When people must fly, they often resort to ineffective ways of coping with the flight. For example, many people resort to using liquor while flying. Other people load up on Valium or other drugs to endure the trip. Through proper treatment, a person may never come to enjoy flying, but according to Dr. Blume, they definitely can learn to reduce their anxiety and fear throughout the process of flying.