

Researcher offers advice on how to reduce the risk of air rage this holiday season

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As a busy travel season approaches, disruptions at the airport and on airlines are inevitable. Travelers' stress and intolerance has significantly increased throughout the year but planning ahead and remaining calm

will facilitate your chaotic travel days. A Baylor College of Medicine expert provides insight on how to plan for and cope with delays and disturbances on flights.

"Passengers' anger and [violence](#) has grown lately. People tend to blame this issue on mental health, but that is not the case. Less than 5 percent of people with mental health issues become violent," said Dr. Asim Shah, professor and executive vice chair in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor.

People are becoming angrier because they feel that there is no recourse. Some common reasons for the rise in passenger [intolerance](#) include:

- Flight delays and cancelations
- Jam-packed flights: this may cause some tension as people are nervous to be around others amid the COVID-19 pandemic
- Substance (alcohol) abuse in the airport and on flights: Passengers can get unruly when consuming substances in excessive quantities
- Decrease in tolerance: Since the pandemic, people's frustration is increasing and they may get worked up over small things
- Masks: Although airlines are transparent about mask requirements, it is causing discontent

This combination of discontent and disruptions is directly related to the amygdala limbic system in the brain, which reacts abnormally to any situation like this instead of responding peacefully. Rather than handling this physical and psychological distress in a calm manner, passengers may become rowdy and irritable.

"The flight crew should try to deescalate this type of situation with calmness, which is easier said than done. Being calm, polite and professional can help to reduce the chaos and build allies among other

passengers," Shah said.

One disruptive passenger can cause anxiety and distress for the rest of the aircraft. If a passenger is being abusive, angry or offensive, a second passenger might intervene. According to Shah, passengers should not get involved as they have no authority and may escalate the situation. Stay calm and quiet and notify the air crew of the disruption. When the crew arrives to mitigate the chaos, come to their rescue if they need support.

Excessive alcohol consumption can cause travelers to become disorderly and physical. While banning alcohol in airports and on flights is an extreme, restrictions should be in place. Airport bartenders and flight crews can stop passengers from continuing to consume alcohol if they become unruly.

"There has to be some check and balance. Not everyone drinks too much, but one person can cause an issue for the entire flight. There must be limits," Shah said.

If traveling causes anxiety, remember specific minor details for a smooth [travel](#) day. Plan for any delays or disruptions and keep calm around irritable passengers.

Shah offers some common sense travel tips to help travelers prepare for delay and disruptions:

- Try to take morning flights and think about a backup flight in the event of cancelations.
- Travel with airlines that will automatically book you for the next flight.
- If your schedule permits, book your travel to arrive a day early so you avoid the risk of arriving at the last minute.
- Purchase travel protection plans for expensive flights.

- Take direct flights when possible and sign up for flight alerts to prevent arriving to the airport with a major [delay](#) or cancelation.
- If you check a bag, have some clothes and important items in your handbag or tote if your luggage gets lost.
- Bring items that will allow you to pass the time: Read a book, watch a movie, do work or anything else that will entertain you.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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