

Do You Have The Proper Attitude?

by H. D. GORSUCH • AOPA 167195

Webster's dictionary describes attitude as "position or bearing as indicating action, feeling, or mood; as, keep a firm attitude; hence the feeling or mood itself; as, a kindly attitude." This may seem a little involved for a definition and maybe it is. Applied to flying it could mean that your skills and success as a pilot can be influenced greatly by your emotions, your outlook and the way you accept a situation.

Let's take a look at several ways that mental attitude and emotions can affect the efficiency of a pilot.

1. *Attitude Toward Your Passengers:* The most important function a pilot can perform is to give a passenger a safe, unexciting and uneventful ride completely without apprehension. Passenger comfort should be of prime consideration. Exaggerated and unnecessary rapid maneuvering of an aircraft carrying passengers may be good for the pilot's ego but will never "win friends and influence people" for flying. "Showing off" flying skill to passengers is a mental luxury no pilot can afford.

2. *Impatience and Haste:* "Make haste slowly" is a good rule for pilots. Being in too much of a hurry to take the time to prepare both yourself and the aircraft for flight is a good way to get into trouble. You need time—not much—but enough to collect your thoughts and clear your mind of unrelated problems. Relying on memory not fortified with a check list is common practice with the impatient pilot. In too much of a hurry to use a check list is a frequent cause for such failures as forgetting to fasten seat belts, checking gas supply and gas shut-off valve, putting mixture control to full-rich when starting the engine, or turning the master switch off at the end of flight.

Being in a hurry creates tenseness and encourages early fatigue. Being in a hurry tempts pilots to continue a flight into weather too difficult to handle instead of turning back or waiting for another day.

3. *Unwillingness to Learn From*

One's Mistakes: Everybody makes mistakes and most of us are reluctant to admit them if we can find a plausible excuse. Sometimes we waste a lot of energy looking for the excuse.

Nothing, of course, is gained by brooding over a mistake but there is a definite reward for those willing to take the time to carefully analyze an error and then set up procedures to prevent a reoccurrence.

4. *Failure to Concentrate:* Trouble is just around the corner for the pilot who tries to fly with his mind miles away on other things. Instrument trained pilots have learned that one can do only about so many things at a time and do these well. Therefore he apporitions short periods of his time in concentrated effort to a task. After a task has been completed, full attention is then directed to the next task, and the next. Even the VFR pilot flying in clear blue skies can be a busy person if a good job of flying, looking and navigating is done. Furthermore, the pilot who tends to business in the cockpit rarely gets lost.

5. *Resenting Authority:* It is natural for some of us to resent being told how, when, and where to fly or to have our flying criticized by others. Proper attitude requires full acceptance of safety rules and the willingness to comply with them. If we don't like them, do something about them on the ground, not at altitude. Proper attitude requires that the pilot be able to accept constructive criticism from his instructor or other competent persons and to make the effort to evaluate the criticism and make changes if these seem necessary.

6. *Self-Discipline:* A pilot's best boss can be himself, provided he works at it. Practicing self-discipline can pay off beautifully in time of an emergency when previous training and good flying habits take over to do the job. Make-shift flying habits are the end result of poor personal discipline and insufficient training.

The one person you can't afford to fool is yourself! ●