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UCF Forum

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11-9-2016

## Flight Emergency Advice Works Just as Well Back on the Ground

Carolyn Massiah

University of Central Florida, [carolyn.massiah@ucf.edu](mailto:carolyn.massiah@ucf.edu)

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### STARS Citation

Massiah, Carolyn (2016). Flight emergency advice works just as well back on the ground. UCF Today, 2016-11-09. Retrieved from <https://today.ucf.edu/flight-emergency-advice-works-just-well-back-ground/>

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## Flight Emergency Advice Works Just as Well Back on the Ground

By Carolyn Massiah

UCF Forum columnist

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

Save yourself first!

This one sentence is a valuable piece of advice I wish I had received and fully embraced so much earlier in life. In fact, it is still a notion that I struggle with because it is one that sounds selfish in nature. However, now more than at any other point in my life, I realize that in order to be selfless and to be able to assist others, you must first truly work on thinking of your own self first.

You must save yourself first.

I am a frequent flyer and I am a professor who wants my students to pay attention when I am providing them with what I know will be important information for them to have at some point in the future.

Those two facts combine to result in me being an attentive airline passenger each and every time the safety briefing is provided by flight attendants. I can nearly recite verbatim the script they deliver but the professor in me will still not allow me to ignore these individuals at the front of their own classroom attempting to provide us important information should we need it in the very near future.

What most passengers do not realize though is that the flight attendants are actually providing one very valuable piece of advice that so few are listening to, comprehending, or acting upon.

You must save yourself first.

If you have ever flown, you remember the flight attendant reassuring you that should the cabin lose air pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the ceiling above, and even if you do not see the bag inflate there is oxygen flowing through the mask. Then they proceed to tell you that if you are traveling with an infant or someone who is unable to put on their own mask, to please place your mask on first before assisting that individual.

When I flew as a young mother with my two young sons, I would often think that it would be so cruel and selfish to put my own mask on before I try to save them.

I *am* their mother. My sole purpose is to protect them. However, as I thought about it, I realized that if I do not place my mask on first, I will suffocate and I may die trying to save them first. Who will save my children should I become unable to help them myself? The most selfless action I could take would be to save myself first so that I am then able to save them.

Now take a moment and think about your own day-to-day life.

Have you deprived your own self of oxygen in order to attempt to save others first? Perhaps, you are continually rushing about to help others out and only succeeding in exhausting yourself. Perhaps you have over-committed so as not to disappoint anyone, only to find out that you really cannot do it all and you are suffocating. Maybe you have a family member or friend that you just know will ask for some form of help at some point in time and you will step forward and provide that help even when it is not really in you to give.

Allow me to be your flight attendant and tell you to stop now and put on your own oxygen mask first before assisting others.

I challenge you to do the follow for yourself whenever you find yourself in a dire situation:.

1. **Place your own mask on first:** Look to your left and to your right at other passengers on this flight called Life. Some are capable of helping themselves and others are not. As life goes by, you will figure out those who will need your help in the event of an emergency. When and if that emergency in life occurs, place your own mask on first. You cannot help others if you are in the same dire straits they are in. Neither of you will survive.
2. **Make certain your own oxygen is flowing:** If you are gasping for air, for time, for motivation, for finances, you absolutely cannot save anyone else. Please be selfish and take care of yourself first. Take a moment or two for yourself. Your oxygen will not flow if you have not worked out the barriers and challenges in your own life. If you are not working on your own oxygen flow, you cannot work on someone else's. Neither of you will survive.
3. **Leave the baggage behind:** The flight attendant will always instruct you to leave behind bags and other personal items in the case of emergency. The same should be said for life. So often we are trying to save others while we are still carrying our own baggage from previous emergencies. Take the time now to deal with those past issues that may prevent you from saving yourself in future emergencies. Also, carrying that baggage will certainly not allow you to assist others in their emergencies. You cannot hold baggage and hands of others at the same time. Neither of you will survive.

Aim to be more selfish in your time and in your actions. The more that you choose to do for yourself, the more capable you are of doing for others. I understand that it may

sound counter-intuitive that being selfish will actually improve your ability to be selfless. However, I ask that you take a leap of faith and place your own oxygen mask on first before attempting to assist others with theirs.

**Save yourself first!**

*Dr. Carolyn A. Massiah is an associate lecturer in the UCF College of Business Administration. She can be reached at [Carolyn.Massiah@ucf.edu](mailto:Carolyn.Massiah@ucf.edu).*