

PILOTS AND STRESS

Several studies rank “airline pilot” as one of the most stressful jobs.

We all know that pilots face very unique stressors. Few professionals are as “watched” as are professional pilots. Having the responsibility for a FedEx aircraft and its valuable cargo is stressful. Added to those stressors particular to the profession are the stressors of everyday life: relationship difficulties, financial worries, health concerns, bereavement issues, work related problems, and separation from family. Pilots are no more immune to these things than anyone else. *FDX ALPA started the **Pilot Assistance Team Hotline (PATH)** as a way to help with the effects of that stress.*

*“I believe aviators will be much more likely to acknowledge the effects of life–stress (if) their organizations destigmatize emotional and psychological issues and improve the medical community’s handling of these cases (e.g., improve mental health providers’ understanding of the impact of their evaluations and . . . recommendations, improve flow of communication between the mental health professional and the treating/referring physician).” (Young, 2008) This issue is exactly what we hope to address with **PATH**.*

PATH peers hope to circumvent the stigma associated with pilots acknowledging emotional or psychological issues by giving them a confidential place where they can discuss mental health issues, *anonymously if they choose*. We also hope to be able to help counselors/mental health professionals understand how their assessments affect pilots’ careers. Our end goal is that pilots feel less constrained about admitting to mental health problems and thereby get the help they need.

Obviously, for many pilots, stresses from family problems are major sources of stress. Therefore, **PATH** is also available for those family members to call if they would like to discuss help for themselves or their pilot family member. There are no negative consequences to calling **PATH**. All information is kept strictly confidential and will only be shared with written permission from the pilot unless there is an immediate threat to life.