



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DELAYS:

Uncertainty, Fairness, and Why We Are Still Waiting

Wait on Purpose Guide.

Use this guide to see why a small wait produces such a large reaction, and to carry a delay with a little more ease.



DEPARTURES

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE
BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

GATE A1

DELAYED



THE WAIT IS NOT THE TIME

Notice how waiting is really measured.

- Unoccupied, anxious, uncertain, and unexplained waits all feel longer than the clock.
- The same delay can be made far less painful without being made any shorter.
- Occupy the time genuinely; absorbed time passes faster than restless checking.

GATE B2

STATUS UNKNOWN



NOT KNOWING IS THE WORST PART

Understand why uncertainty stings.

- An uncertain wait is worse than a longer wait of known length.
- The rolling delay keeps you vigilant and unable to settle or cope.
- Ask specifically when the next update will come; it bounds an open-ended vigil.

GATE C3

SEE AGENT



WHY UNFAIRNESS ENRAGES

See what the anger is really about.

- People care intensely about whether a process is fair, sometimes more than the outcome.
- Unfairness produces indignation, a moral emotion with far more force than frustration.
- The loudest arguments are about not counting, not about the time itself.

GATE D4

NOW BOARDING



CARRYING IT WELL

Protect the resource that keeps you steady.

- Frustration tolerance depletes; water, food, and movement protect it.
- Sunk cost holds people in place; ask only what is best from here.
- Staff did not cause the delay; a wry tone can lift a whole gate.



DR. Z TAKEAWAY

The size of the reaction is manufactured by the conditions rather than the delay. If the intensity feels disproportionate to a two-hour wait, it usually is, and the excess is generally indignation or depletion rather than the time itself. Naming that makes it far less likely to land on someone who did not cause it.

SAME GROUND
BRIGHTER TOMORROWS



SAME
PEOPLE
BRIGHTER
PLACES
AHEAD

Good
People
Wait Here
Too ♥



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Connection heals. Conversations help.