

What scares you the most?

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Hi everyone! I thought it would be fun, and hopefully interesting, to look at the subject of FEAR on today's Monday Mindset call. We titled today's call, "What scares you the most?", so before we get started on the science of fear, and what to do about it, I'd like to hear from you....



What scares you the most?

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway

by Susan Jeffers, PhD

Originally published in 1987, *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway* addresses the causes of fear and how to handle it. The blog “Four Minute Books” does a good job of summarizing the book:

Here are the 3 most powerful lessons about it I could find:

Every fear in your life is based on the same, single root fear.

Be positive, because it's the most realistic perspective you can have on life.

There are no wrong decisions.

Feel the fear yet? We'll explore it anyway!

Lesson 1: Every single fear you have can be traced back to one universal root fear.

There are as many fears as there are people on this planet, right? In theory, yes. But Susan did some digging and she found this really cool way of dissecting any fear that shows you that it all goes back to one single root fear we all share.

Susan says you can analyze each one of your fears on three levels:

External fears.

Internal fears.

The root fear.

On the first level, you look at which external factor is behind your fear. It's usually one of two. You're either afraid of something happening to you, like death, or afraid of making something happen, like ending your bad relationship.

However, on the second level, when you try to connect these external fears to your internal state of mind, you'll see that externals have nothing to do with it, and it's really all in your head. The more general categories you can now put your fears into are fear of being vulnerable or helpless and the fear of getting rejected or failing.

For example, there's nothing you can do about death and no one is immortal, so this makes you feel both vulnerable and helpless. Ending your relationship is scary and you might not have the guts to say it, so there's a decent chance of failure.

At the root of all of these general fears, on the third level, is ***the fear of not being able to handle life's challenges.***

Simply put: You don't trust yourself to figure things out when they happen. You think you won't be able to handle breaking up or, well, dying. Now imagine a world where you believe you can handle everything life throws at you.

Would you still have your fear? Trusting in your ability to figure it out is the number one killer of fear.



Lesson 2: Start being positive, because it's actually the most realistic perspective you could have on life.

Do you spend a lot of time worrying about the future?

Trick question. I know you do.

Take a second to think about how much of the stuff you worry about actually happens. It's not too much, is it? As a matter of fact, we spend a ton of time sweating the small stuff, but 90% of our worries never turn into the reality we fear. If that's true, then isn't the only logical consequence to have positive expectations of the future?

If you expect good things to happen, you'll be right in your predictions a lot more often, and therefore feel more confident, because being right is reassuring.

Not only that, how you think things will turn out is actually a big determinant of how they will. Susan mentions the example of holding out your arm and repeating the words "I am weak" over and over, then have someone try to push your arm down. Their job will be a lot easier this way, rather than if you affirm yourself with "I am strong".

{Do you see the Four Boxes at work here? What we have in our Box 1 determines how we see the world. "Worry is a mis-use of the imagination."}



Lesson 3: You cannot make a wrong decision. Ever.

Case in point: How do you approach decisions?

Do you usually think about what good might come from them? Or rather worry about making the wrong choice? Should you take the job offer, or stick with your current one? Try to fix your relationship, or end it?

Most of the time, we use “if-then-clauses” to collect the pros and cons for making decisions. Like “if I end my current relationship, I might never find someone else” or “if I stick with this person, I might make myself really miserable”.

But this leads you to assume that there’s a wrong and a right decision, which there isn’t.

Since it’s impossible to predict the future, Susan says there are no wrong decisions, only opportunities to learn and grow. You cannot lose, just become more self-aware. For example, if you do decide to stick with your relationship and break up 6 months later, you now know a lot more about what type of person you want and don’t want to be with.

Thinking with this win-win perspective will eliminate your fear of making decisions and show you that you in fact are able to handle any situation. For example, even if you do end up being alone for a year or two after you break up, you’ll see that you can survive and learn to be perfectly okay with just being yourself, thus eliminating any remaining fear of ending up alone.

{Notice the either/or MM thinking here. And the power of shifting to BOTH/AND!}



The Five Truths About Fear

from *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*

by Susan Jeffers, PhD

FEAR TRUTH #1 - The fear will never go away as long as you continue to grow!

Every time you take a step into the unknown, you experience fear. There is no point in saying, "When I am no longer afraid, then I will do it." You'll be waiting for a long time. The fear is part of the package. {There is always going to be another border.}

FEAR TRUTH #2 - The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out and...do it!

When you do it often enough, you will no longer be afraid in that particular situation. You will have faced the unknown and you will have handled it. Then new challenges await you, which certainly add to the excitement in living. {Live on our cards.}

FEAR TRUTH #3 - The only way to feel better about yourself is to go out and...do it again!

With each little step you take into unknown territory, a pattern of strength develops. You begin feeling stronger and stronger and stronger. {The power of small, sweet steps.}

FEAR TRUTH #4 - Not only are you afraid when facing the unknown, so is everyone else!

This should be a relief. You are not the only one out there feeling fear. Everyone feels fear when taking a step into the unknown. Yes, all those people who have succeeded in doing what they have wanted to do in life have felt the fear - and did it anyway. So can you! {Everyone has monkey mind. We are all on an amazing journey with hero's hearts and monkey minds.}

FEAR TRUTH #5 - Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the bigger underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness!

This is the one truth that some people have difficulty understanding. When you push through the fear, you will feel such a sense of relief as your feeling of helplessness subsides. You will wonder why you did not take action sooner. You will become more and more aware that you can truly handle anything that life hands you. {Look, see, tell the truth and take that action!}



**DO ONE THING EVERY
DAY THAT SCARES YOU.**

**Those small things that make us
uncomfortable help us build
courage to do the work we do.**

- Eleanor Roosevelt

Stop Fear From Ruining All the Things

from “The Science of Fear and How To Overcome It”

by Andrea Ayres

A brief disclaimer: Dealing with a fear that you find to be completely overtaking your life is truly better left to professionals! I can, however, offer some modest advice for how to overcome our everyday fears, like public speaking, or talking on the phone (surely I’m not the only one).

Question

Our fear response is largely unconscious, so the first thing you need to do is bring awareness to what the hell is happening. ***You have to question the basis for your fear.***

What am I afraid of?

What triggered this fear?

What is the worst that can happen?

You may think these questions seem silly or obvious, but it’s not about the complexity of the question, it’s about unravelling the fear. It’s about untangling it from our minds so that we can get control of it. The thing about fear is that it often makes us believe things that just aren’t true. {Either/Or thinking}

For instance: “I quit that job, therefore I am a quitter.”

What am I actually afraid of? I’m afraid of not being good enough. I’m afraid of letting people down and not living up to my potential. Now that I understand this, I can use evidence to contradict my fear. It’s also extremely beneficial to talk to others about your fears. Research indicates that just admitting what fears you have can help you get over them faster. {look, see, tell the truth}

Dispute and reframe your fear into something that isn’t a scary abstract beast. Break it apart into pieces that you can control by questioning and understanding it.

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Face it

Say you experienced some particularly horrific turbulence on an airplane and now you can't fly. In fact, any time you see a plane, you freeze up. That's just your brain doing what it thinks it should do. Instead, it's actually just debilitating. What do you do?

You see an airplane up in the sky and instead of ignoring it, ***you look at it.*** Oh, that wasn't so bad, right?

“When you hear an airplane rumbling overhead, you can freeze, or you can take a step. And with every step you reroute the path of fear through the amygdala.”—Joseph LeDoux

Okay, it's one thing to look up at a plane in the sky, but what if you are afraid of something like an earthquake? It's not like you can actively seek one out. So what do you do in situations where you may not want to (or cannot) expose yourself to the actual fear?

Learn everything you can about it. This advice comes from Melanie Pinoa over at Lifehacker. We tend to fear things we do not understand or are not familiar with. When you take charge of learning about your fear you are asserting power of it. That alone can make you feel better, but this process can also help teach you where your fear stemmed from in the first place. {Reminds us of the uncertainty and unpredictability of physical reality.}

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Workout

Whenever I am really nervous about something, my first inclination is to work out. I mean I’ve worked out before interviews, before getting on a plane, I thought this was due to some personal defect, but apparently it serves a purpose.

Working out gives fear an outlet. Your heart has a reason to pump, your breath has a reason to become ragged. That helps your mind say “Hey, I’m not dying, I’m just working out!”

Which research has found, is actually quite powerful. If you work out for 20-30 minutes prior to engaging in something you know you are afraid of, you can use up some adrenaline. Exercise also helps to get control over your stress hormones, which reduces anxiety too. It releases endorphins and reduces tension in your body. What’s not to like?

These elements work together to help counteract what your body would normally do in a fear based situation, helping you to regain control over your internal systems.

{i.e., we’re working with our brains and not against them.}



“There’s a common misunderstanding among all the human beings who have ever been born on earth that the best way to live is to try to avoid pain and just try to get comfortable. You see this even in insects and animals and birds.

We’re all the same.

A much more interesting, kind, and joyful approach to life is to begin to develop our curiosity,
not caring whether the object of our curiosity is bitter or sweet.

To lead a life that goes beyond pettiness and prejudice and always wanting to make sure that everything turns out on our own terms, to lead a more passionate, full, and delightful life than that, we must realize that we can endure a lot of pain and pleasure for the sake of finding out who we are and what this world is, how we tick and how our world ticks, how the whole thing just is.

If we are committed to comfort at any cost, as soon as we come up against the least edge of pain, we’re going to run; we’ll never know what’s beyond that particular barrier or wall or fearful thing.”

- Pema Chodron