

How Fear Inhibits Self-Expression and Personal Growth

"The thing I fear most is fear," said De Montaigne.

This sentiment is echoed by other great writers.

"Nothing is terrible except fear itself," said Francis Bacon.

"The only thing I am afraid of is fear," said the Duke of Wellington.

"Nothing is so much to be feared as fear," said Henry David Thoreau.

Fear is the ultimate limiting emotion. It overthrows reason. It paralyzes action.

In very rare times, in an emergency, fear may help us to act to save ourselves or someone else, but for the most part, it ruins all initiative, growth, and spontaneous right action.

Shakespeare commented that "Of all base passions, fear is the most accursed."

The number one fear most people have is of public speaking. Yet, this fear has no survival value at all. The worst that can happen is that you are not articulate and people disapprove of your ideas or your way of delivering them.

Fear is simply the nauseating sensation in your abdominal area that over-rides any good sense you might have about anything. If allowed to persist, the surge of adrenaline causes your body to break down at a cellular level. We call it stress, but that is only the name we give for a body that is taut with fear.

Yet when you examine the cause of any fear, it is usually nothing more than a highly-charged negative opinion.

Unfortunately, it is in those areas that we must grow that we feel the most fear. In fact, beyond the boundary of your fear is your next greatest opportunity.

The result of this fear is that we stay trapped in limiting realities--poor paying jobs that barely allow us to survive, relationships that whittle our self-esteem to mush, educational opportunities that could expand our perception and massively improve our lives.

The most ironic thing is that those who push themselves to deal with their fear--find nothing there.

Someone, for example, who is afraid to speak up will find when he or she does that nobody is shocked, appalled, or indignant. In fact, things seem to improve because of it.

Fear left unchecked can lead to all kinds of neurosis and inhibitions. An extreme fear, which has no basis in reality, leads to paranoia.

The whole thing about fear is that unless your life is being threatened, it makes things far worse than they need to be.

The aggressions of governments, the escalation of nuclear armaments, express individual fears magnified a thousand-fold.

And the reaction to fear is so extreme that something is actually created to fear.

On an individual level, fear is partially or completely debilitating. It is the misuse of the imagination to create horrible scenarios. As Michael Pritchard once said, "Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed."

Understanding that fear is a False Estimation About Reality is one step toward eliminating it. The final step is to do the thing that you fear, either all at once or through baby steps, and discovering that the monster in the closet was only your own imagination run amok.

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About the Author

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