

Blueprints for Change

F.E.A.R.

Many of us heading down the road of growth find that it is not the lack of skills or knowledge, nor the lack of focus or desire that keeps us from achieving our personal and professional goals. Rather, it is **False Evidence Appearing Real** that stops us from beginning an endeavor or puts the brakes on the progress we may have achieved. It's fear more than anything else that causes our energy to dry up and keeps us from making commitments to our success.

One possible starting point for the person who wants to break out of being held back by such self-defeating behavior is to recognize and understand his or her personal fears. These fears - and here I am referring only the mythical fears that block the road to breakthrough - are, in effect, bridges that link our unconscious conclusions with our conscious choices. In other words, we have faulty beliefs about what will happen if we behave in a certain way. The more we are able to recognize and understand our mythical fears, the better prepared we will be to make winning choices.

Virtually all mythical fears fall into two broad categories: (1) the fear of discovering something unpleasant about ourselves and (2) the fear of what others might think of us or do to us. In fact, any single fear may appear to belong to both of these categories.

Many people continue to behave in self-defeating ways simply because they fear that if they don't choose a familiar but destructive behavior, they will find out something about themselves that they don't believe they can live with. The specific fear a person latches onto is often a reaction to an irrational but deeply held belief about his or her essence. For example, people who ignore their own needs and present a picture of sweetness and caring to the world, often fear that if they assert themselves or ask for what they deserve, they will have to acknowledge the fact that they are "pushy", self-centered" or "hateful".

Other "facts" that people are afraid to discover about themselves include being a stupid person; an incompetent person; a weak and vulnerable person; a greedy, ambitious person; an untrustworthy person; an irresponsible person or perhaps even absolutely nothing. This last "fact" is part of the belief system of those individuals who believe they will lose their identity if they abandon a self-defeating behavior, even one that has led them into difficulty after difficulty.

Aside from the fear of finding something unpleasant at the core of the self, the other mythical fear that blocks people is the fear that if they don't behave in a certain way, others will attack, hurt, or ignore them. People who live in fear of what others might do can rarely relax; they believe that tension, worry, being "on the go" are all that protect them from some nasty external agent. This type of fearful thinking may be expressed in terms of the individual who continues to practice a self-defeating behavior so that others don't lose respect for him/her; reject him/her; make demands he/she can't handle; take advantage of him/her or see how terrible he/she really is.

The best way to deal with mythical fears is not to create them in the first place. However, once created, we need to learn to face our fears if we are to make positive changes in the way we think and act. We need to **Face Everything And Recover**.

■ **Whenever you feel the fear rising ... STOP and WAIT**

Take a step back. Remain cool and objective. Ask yourself, "what is the worst that can happen?" Describe the fear in terms of a conditional statement..."I'm afraid that if I don't _____ (describe your self-defeating behavior), then _____ (describe what you think will happen)."

Once you've done this, you can test the fear by breaking the destructive bargain on which it is based. You can stop practicing the self-defeating behavior that the fear assumes and then see if what you fear does indeed happen.

■ **Think about what you would tell a friend if they were faced with the same fear.**

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Sometimes it can be easier to tell someone else how to proceed. Act as your own friend.

- **Successful people feel fear too!**

They act confidently in spite of their fears. Often their fear is greater because the more people they reach, the more they risk. They make their PURPOSE and their VISION greater than their fear.

- **Try to focus on things outside of yourself.**

It is the constant internal focusing that pumps you up and causes the fear to continue growing until it become unmanageable. Count backwards from 100 by 3, engage in conversation, imagine yourself in some pleasant place, recite a poem or anything else that will get your mind off your feeling.

- **Choose to change the tape.**

Rehearse going into the situation in a positive way. Continue rehearsing until the positive influence is felt. Practice negative thought stopping and replace the fear with the behavior you want.

- **Place emphasis on what you are doing, not what you are feeling.**

Experiencing anxiety gives you an opportunity to practice coping with it. Try to function with the fear. Accept it; don't fight it. If your mind is focused on the "doing", it doesn't have time to feel the fear.

- **Go slowly**

Rushing tends to pump the body and make the fear appear worse. Imagine yourself in slow motion. Breathe deeply. Inhale slowly to the count of 4, hold the breath to the count of 6 and exhale to the count of 8.

- **Try to remain in the present**

It is the constant fear of what is GOING to happen or what you are GOING to feel that keeps you anxious. Identify what you are feeling at the moment; don't add to it by jumping into the future. Deal with it from moment to moment.

- **Muster determination and take action**

By doing this, you will gain the energy and momentum needed to knock down the fear. The more you let fear keep you from taking action, the more your self-confidence drops. If you meet those fears head-on and succeed, the greater your self-confidence will be. Courage is what you find on the other side of fear. If you are to challenge the status quo and grow, there is the risk of failure. Any failure is only a temporary setback on the road to success. If your fears cause inaction, you'll never learn and never improve. The challenge is to redirect negative energy and disappointment - **Face Everything And Recover.**

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