

Overcoming Your Fear Factor

What's stopping you from going after what you want?

Darryl wants to establish his own business, but thinks he'll deprive his family of their comfortable lifestyle. Kelly wants to get her PhD, but her friends tell her she'll lose her independence.

We often hesitate to follow our hearts, to grow, because of perceived barriers. To take charge of our careers, we need to identify what's blocking us. Are any of the following stopping you from pursuing your career dreams?

- Afraid you can't find help?
- Fearful you'll lose your secure or high income, pension or other benefits?
- Afraid that change will interfere with your personal relationships or create family hardships?
- Frightened of losing power or prestige?
- Afraid of making a mistake or of being successful?

Or do you merely lack goals?

Manage Your Fears

Many barriers to career growth involve fear. Acknowledge your fears. Fear is a reassuring signal that you're about to stretch yourself. Fear alerts you to protect yourself from loss.

Underlying most fear is lack of trust in your ability to perform. Some fear is good, instinctual. It alerts you to danger. But continuous fear is destructive, a barrier to growth.

Fear is the result of conditioning. We learn early to be cautious. Parents warn children to "be careful." This conveys messages that we won't be able to cope. Because fear is learned, it can be unlearned.

Helpful Hints

Try the following to manage fear:

Live in the present. Fear is the acronym for False Expectations Appear Real. Don't worry about what might happen. Live now. Research your goal, develop an action plan to minimize setbacks, and each day work toward your goal.

Let go of "attachments." Since fear usually accompanies the process of "letting go," the more attached you are to something, the greater the fear of losing it. If you're attached to a good-paying job, you may fear leaving it for work that promises more growth.

Know and accept yourself. Know your passion. Fear results from a discrepancy between your actions and needs. When you're true to your mission, you experience harmony and stability. When you ignore your spiritual self, you experience disharmony, indecision and doubt. Work at achieving goals that are compatible with your passion. Believe you'll attain them.

Don't try to live up to others' expectations. What do you want? If you're centered, your personal power will help you achieve your goals. You'll feel comfortable taking the necessary steps. Money and possessions will often be a by-product.

See yourself as someone who has choices, takes action, and operates from a position of inner strength. You're in control and have choices. As your power builds, so will your confidence and risk-taking ability. Not taking action is a choice.

Watch yourself talk. Keep a log to track the negatives you say. Each time you catch yourself saying something that fuels your fear; replace it with a more positive statement. Think "I can" instead of "I can't."

Read inspirational books and begin the day with a positive thought.

Form a support group. Associate with people who make you feel wonderful and support your goals. See each other regularly for feedback and encouragement.

Develop the will to risk. Risk taking gets easier with practice. Start with small risks in daily activities. Before going to sleep at night, plan your risk for the next day.

Try this fantasy risk exercise. Think of a risk you would like to take. What would you gain from taking it? What's frightening about it? What's the worst thing that could happen if it turned out badly? If the worst happened, what would you do? What could you do to minimize this? What information would make this less risky? If you broke the risk into small steps, what would the first step be? When could you take it? Do this for each step.

Live a balanced life. Become involved in varied activities (e.g., relationships, hobbies, spiritual and community activities) to make your life complete. This will enhance your creativity. You may even enjoy a job which was unsatisfying.

By better managing fear, your work and your life will both improve!