



Fear and Fearlessness

by Nika N. Quirk, M.B.A.

Living in Fear. Is that our destiny? With the economy rocking the ground under our feet and the hawks of war screeching above our heads, it sure can feel frightening every day. What can we do about Fear?

I notice that Fear is bound up tightly with Change, whether transition is our decision or externally caused. Fear shows up when we choose to be more Free, as well as when our Freedom is threatened. Fear can make us hide, to second-guess ourselves, to feel hopeless, helpless, and small. To live a rich, deep and whole life, we must see and know our fears so that we are empowered to move them out of our way.

We have an instinctual fear that helps us to react and survive when real physical danger threatens. But there also exists the voice that pops up to question our decisions and actions. It may be the undermining whisper that says "not good enough", "too risky", "couldn't possibly succeed". Or perhaps it's the pessimist insisting that we have no power and must submit to being helpless. We might hear the supportive pal who tells us to play it safe and just "stick with the program". Alarming, sometimes the panicked one appears, to run in circles shouting "What are we going to do? We're all gonna die!" Yes. I think you all know what I'm talking about. These are the voices of The Committee of Gremlins in our heads.

In Pema Chodron's "The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times", I find affirmation and much wisdom. She says, "We know that all is impermanent; we know that everything wears out. Although we can buy this truth intellectually, emotionally we have a deep-rooted aversion to it. We want permanence; we expect permanence. Our natural tendency is to seek security; we believe we can find it...We use our daily activity as a shield against the fundamental ambiguity of our situation, expending tremendous energy trying to ward off impermanence and death."

Our fears come from our very human desire and expectation about being secure and *in control*. That's why they appear whenever the boat begins to rock. Part of us makes a brave (but perhaps futile) attempt to provide the illusion of safety in a world where there's no guarantees or predictions possible.

What can we do about Fear? Chodron makes clear the choice: "We have two alternatives: either we question our beliefs--or we don't. Either we accept our fixed versions of reality--or we begin to challenge them."



Can we find the inspiration to challenge our deep conditioning and beliefs?

Yes – I see this every day with my clients and in my own journey. I find embracing impermanence a bit more lessens my confusion and concern. I do my best, as we all must, to live the reality of each day as it unfolds. I focus on my core purpose, the joy and satisfaction I want in life, what I am committed to practicing and teaching.

Here's the invitation to not live in fear:

Breathe...Notice...Name the Fear...Embrace that Life is Continuous Transition...Find Amusement with the desire and expectation of Control...Let Go of the Fear...Trust in Spirit...Practice Peace...Live with an Open Heart.

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