

OVERCOMING --- FEAR



STUDENT'S EDGE

A Southwestern Coaching Module

FEAR

Fear is an emotion. In school, you might experience fear when you try and make new friends, when you have to give an important presentation to your class, when confrontation with someone is inevitable, or when you set a goal that's so big you're not sure you can actually accomplish it. As an athlete, fear of making a mistake can cloud the mind. As a musician, fear can create performance anxiety during a concert.

The fear you feel when giving a presentation and the fear you feel if you are scared for your life comes from the same place. It is your mind telling you to be careful, that something you are about to do might kill you! It sounds ridiculous, but the mammalian brain uses fear to help us survive in the wild. It is useful when it prevents us from jumping off a cliff because it lets us know that we would likely not survive. It also uses fear to prevent us from being ostracized from our tribe, which used to be a death sentence in tribal times. In today's society fears have become overgrown and misplaced.

If you're feeling fear when publicly speaking, it is likely for three reasons.

3 REASONS FOR FEAR

1. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

This fear comes from a place of truly not knowing what to do. Maybe you're lacking some resources and aren't even sure where to begin to look for answers. Maybe you don't know how to overcome a particular challenge, and every time it comes up you feel afraid.

2. LACK OF PREPARATION

This occurs when you have the knowledge, but you aren't prepared for the situation. Maybe you haven't practiced or rehearsed enough to feel confidently prepared.

3. LACK OF CONFIDENCE

Deep down, you don't believe that you can overcome whatever challenge you might be facing.

FEAR continued

The only way to overcome fear is to have courage. Courage isn't a lack of fear. It's the choice to act when faced with fear. And sometimes that's all it is. It doesn't have to be an over-the-top response. Any action at all is courage. The longer you wait to take action, the greater the fear can grow. Sometimes that's as simple as taking the next step—approaching that person you need to talk to, raising your hand to give your presentation next, or starting that difficult conversation. Courage can mean taking action on increasing your knowledge, preparing in advance, and using self-talk to build your confidence to do what you didn't know you were capable of doing. The number-one thing you can do to overcome fear is to ACT.

What are some of the situations where you feel fear? Categorize them below based on where you think each fear comes from.

Lack of Knowledge

Lack of Preparation

Lack of Confidence

RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU HAVE FEARS

F.E.A.R.

If you only did things that didn't scare you, would you be living your best life? Fear can be an indicator that something is worthwhile. Sometimes fear is based on circumstances that aren't even grounded in truth. Fear actually stands for:

F – False, **E** – Evidence, **A** – Appearing, **R** – Real

6 FORMS OF FEAR

Fear takes many different forms. Sometimes we may not even recognize it as fear. Listed below are six different forms fear takes, along with some potential solutions.

1. Indifference

- a. Lack of ambition, lack of willingness to tolerate discomfort, acceptance of whatever compensation life may offer without protest.
- b. **Solution:** Create a vision for yourself. Visualize where you want to be in ten days, ten weeks, ten months, or ten years. Write it down.

2. Indecision

- a. The habit of permitting others to do one's thinking—staying on the fence.
- b. **Solution:** Start thinking for yourself. Opportunities are only opportunities if you take them. Stop using words like sure, maybe, whatever.

3. Doubt

- a. Making excuses, covering things up. Self-consciousness
- b. **Solution:** Remember, the answer lies in action. Take action now. Stop using phrases like "I'm not able to" and "that's just who I am."

4. Worry

- a. Feeling anxious. Constantly focusing on uncontrollable events, nervousness
- b. **Solution:** Focus on what you can control. Stop using words like should, would, could, try, and need to. Start using more committal language like "I am, I do."

5. Overcautious

- a. The habit of looking for the negative in every circumstance and person, constantly waiting for the right time, pessimism.
- b. **Solution:** Train your mind to look for potentially positive outcomes. Look to those who have succeeded and not to those who have failed. Remind yourself of the times you have succeeded in the past.

RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU HAVE FEARS continued

6. Procrastination

- a. The habit of putting off until tomorrow that which should have been done previously. Avoiding action because you think the outcome can be avoided.. Lack of self-confidence.
- b. **Solution:** Take action now on the things that you know you should be doing. Repeat the mantra, “No time is a good time, so right now is the best time.”

To conquer your fears, you must take action as soon as possible. Figuring out how to act in the face of fear is a skill that you can learn and develop. Keeping in mind the six forms of fear, complete the exercise below.

What are the top forms of fear that you experience the most in your day-to-day life? What are some actions you can take now to combat these fears? Write down your ideas in the space below and do one of them before you go to bed tonight.

Your fears in day-to-day life:

Remedies to overcome your fears:

RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU HAVE FEARS continued

You have probably dealt with each of these forms of fear throughout life. It's also important to remember that other people on the opposing sports team experience the same fear. The other chairs in your orchestra, the other dancers in your troupe, the other artists in your class; they all struggle with similar fears. If you're able to overcome your fears, you will be taking a major step towards leadership.

In the space below, reflect on your fears in different performance situations as well as your friends', coaches', and teachers' fears. Put yourself in their shoes!

Your fears before and during a game/concert/class presentation:

Remedies to overcome your fears:

Your friends' fears when talking to you:

Remedies to overcome their fears:

Your fears talking to or confronting a friend:

Remedies to overcome that fear:

OVERCOMING WORRY

Worry is one of the many forms of fear. We deal with worry every day. It's everywhere. Some people tend to worry more than others, but it is something everyone has to deal with at some point or another.

High-performing students, musicians, and athletes know that worrying is not an efficient use of time. Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere.

3 STEPS TO OVERCOMING WORRY

Take these steps every day to overcome the rut of worry.

STEP 1

ANALYZE YOUR SITUATION.

Figure out the worst that could happen. For example, you make a mistake during a performance or presentation. What's the worst that can happen? People in the audience recognize you made a mistake. The reality is that they probably have plenty of other things to think about that day.

STEP 2

FULLY ACCEPT YOUR SITUATION.

Live it and own it. Feel as if it has already happened.

STEP 3

FOCUS ON THE SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM.

Moving forward, try to never bring up a problem for which you have not already considered potential solutions or possible alternatives. This will train your mind to go into problem-solving mode automatically.

One of the worst things worry can do is destroy your ability to concentrate. You lose the power of making decisions. When you accept the worst outcome, you can eliminate all the other possible outcomes and gain clarity about the true problem.

OVERCOMING WORRY continued

Think of a situation that is causing you to worry. Go through the three steps above and write down your observations. Reflect on whether this process helped you overcome being stuck in a state of worry.

Situation:

1.

2.

3.

ACTION CURES FEAR

Even high performers deal with the fear of failure at certain points. Fear of failure causes mediocrity. It keeps you from actualizing your abilities. It causes you to give up too soon. It keeps you from discovering that success is usually the result of persistence.

If you don't do the things you fear, you also miss out on the chance to grow. Whenever you face fear, there is the opportunity for an incredible amount of freedom on the other side.

4 STEPS TO OVERCOMING YOUR FEARS

STEP 1

IDENTIFY WHERE YOU HAVE FEAR.

It might not be anything extreme. For example, you might have a fear of taking a test. You may think, "If I don't get it done quickly enough I might fail the test!" Your fear could also be a big goal that you haven't been able to visualize yourself accomplishing. Identifying where you are afraid is the first step to facing it.

STEP 2

REALIZE THE LIKELIHOOD OF YOUR FEAR COMING TO PASS.

F.E.A.R. stands for False Evidence Appearing Real. When you think about your fears logically instead of emotionally, you may realize the actual possibility of that fear becoming a reality is slim to none. If you have studied appropriately and read the material and understand the information, it's simply a matter of recall.

STEP 3

VISUALIZE YOUR SUCCESS.

Remember that mental practice helps program your mental computer. Or, as Dr. Maxwell Maltz wrote, "Your subconscious mind cannot tell the difference between a real experience and one that you vividly imagine." To do this, pause several times daily, and imagine yourself doing the thing you fear. In the process, should you become tense and apprehensive, back off a bit. Then, after a few seconds, mentally go through the experience again. Do this conceptual exercise several times each day. Keep this up for a minimum of 21 days and notice the progress you make.

STEP 4

TAKE ACTION.

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is being afraid but acting anyway. When you act in the face of fear, you become stronger. The only way to overcome fear is by doing. Creating new experiences around what we fear and developing newfound confidence allows us to defeat fear.

ACTION CURES FEAR continued

LONG TERM FEAR CONQUERING TIPS:

DO ACTIVITIES THAT ARE RELATED TO THE THINGS YOU FEAR.

Each day, if you can, or at least each week, do an activity related to (or similar to) the thing you fear. For example, if you want to become a better presenter but you're afraid to stand in front of people, do something related to it that's fairly safe. Enroll in a speaking course. Talk with people who speak in public. Offer to teach a class in your community.

Do other things that get you up before people in non-threatening situations. The secret here is to participate in less intimidating experiences related to your fear. Facing your fear in these situations will help you gradually develop confidence.

ASSOCIATE WITH PEOPLE WHO DO THINGS SIMILAR TO WHAT YOU'RE AFRAID TO DO.

This practice is powerful. By associating with people who do things you're afraid to do, you structure a successful environment—a support system. You can learn from them, but probably the most important thing you'll discover is that they're not smarter or more talented than you are. You'll learn that they're able to do the things you want to do because they have worked and have overcome their fear.

ACTION CURES FEAR continued

Do you have any goals you'd like to accomplish, but the fear of failure might be holding you back? Make a list of those goals below and pick one to work on this month by using the action steps listed in this section.

ACTION ITEMS



DO IT SCARED

I once heard a true story of a woman who was trapped in a burning building on the 80th floor. She had an intensive fear of heights and also an intensive fear of closed in spaces so when the fire alarm went off she absolutely refused to follow her colleagues into the stairwell to evacuate to safety.

She could not handle the thought of going down the stairs being able to look down in the middle all the way to the bottom. And the thought of being trapped inside the enclosed stairwell was just too much to endure and so instead she made a conscious choice to hide under her desk and wait to die.

Until some firemen made it up to her floor and were doing a sweep of the building when they found her in time to where they could still get her out. They told her she would have to take the stairs or she would surely burn alive in the flames. And yet she still wanted to choose death over facing her fear!

Finally a fireman grabbed her and picked her up and started dragging her towards the stairs. She wouldn't stop kicking and screaming "I'm scared! I don't want to because I'm scared!" And he couldn't get her to go anywhere until he said these magical words to her "That's ok, do it scared."

"Do it scared. Do it scared. It's ok to be scared just do it scared." He kept saying it into her ear as he rushed her all the way down 80 flights of stairs. "Do it scared. It's ok to be scared just do it scared."

The story illustrates the situation many people face each day – a choice between the known and the unknown. Few of them have the courage to come alive, to stop being engulfed in a sea of mediocrity – humbled and dulled by their failure to recognize their own potential. They lack the guts to stop living their lives in a mentally chloroformed condition in that ignoble mass of humanity, the uncommitted.

William James said, "The one thing that will guarantee the successful conclusion of a doubtful undertaking is faith in the beginning that we can do it."

If you keep doing what you always did, you'll keep getting what you always got. Take a deep breath and go for it.

THE BLACK DOOR

Several generations ago, during one of the most turbulent of the desert wars in the Middle East, a spy was captured and sentenced to death by a General of the Persian Army. The General, a man of intelligence and compassion, had adopted a strange and unusual custom in such areas. He permitted the condemned person to make a choice. The prisoner could either face the firing squad or pass through the Black Door.

As the moment of execution drew near, the General ordered the spy be brought before him for a short, final interview, the primary purpose of which was to receive the answer of the doomed man to the query: "What shall it be - the firing squad or the Black Door?"

This was not an easy decision and the prisoner hesitated, but soon made it known that he much preferred the firing squad to the unknown horrors that might wait for him behind the ominous and mysterious door. Not long thereafter, a volley of shots in the courtyard announced that the grim sentence had been fulfilled.

The General, staring at his boots, turned to his aide and said, "You see how it is with men: they will always prefer the known way to the unknown. It is a characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet, I gave him his choice."

"What lies behind the Black Door?" asked the aide.

"Freedom," replied the General, "and I've known only a few men brave enough to take it."

This story illustrates the situation many of us face each day - a choice between the known and the unknown. Few people have the courage to come alive, to stop being engulfed in a sea of mediocrity. Too many are humbled and dulled by their failure to recognize their own potential. They lack the guts to stop living their lives in a mentally chloroformed condition in that ignoble mass of humanity, the uncommitted.

William James once said, "The one thing that will guarantee the successful conclusion of a doubtful undertaking is faith in the beginning that you can do it."

If you keep thinking the way you've always thought, you'll keep doing what you've always done, and you'll keep getting what you've always gotten.

Take a deep breath, and go for it.