

Remove Fear by Being Prepared  
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What happens when fear makes you protect yourself from the awfulness that might happen?

Ghosts in the dark make you run to escape, causing you to bump into a wall or trip and fall, and hurt yourself. Even if the “ghost” was just a white shirt draped over the back of a chair, imagined ghosts have the power to torment and damage. Fear of falling forward on a Pogo Stick prevents you from placing the end of the Pogo Stick under your center of gravity, keeping you off balance, causing you to fall backward. Fear of falling on your face prevents having the joy of reaching 10 jumps. In a handstand, fear of falling frontward (onto your back) keeps you underbalanced causing you to fall backward to your feet. So, you tell yourself, “I can’t do it.” Fear of falling on the Balance-Beam causes you to stay low in the upside-down part of a cartwheel, which prevents getting your feet under you, which causes you to scrape your shin while falling sideways to the floor.

When someone is controlled by fear, they enter a "survival mode" where their primary focus is minimizing risk and staying safe. This can significantly hinder their ability to engage in activities that contribute to their success and wellbeing.

Fear of failing leads to failure. The more you protect yourself from the awfulness, the more likely it will happen. If you are seeking to protect yourself from the awfulness, you are not paying attention to what is needed to succeed in the activity. Fear prevents humans from doing what they could, becoming what they can, or venturing into someplace that leads to actualization.

Develop your potential. Live with caution and sensibility, but not fear.

“No Fear” in a person without skill will not lead to success. You can’t be stupid about your skills. “Fools jump in where angels fear to tread”. “Look before you leap.” Those are all valid admonishments. But, when you know you can do it, you can do it. When you have demonstrated all the skills in practice, you can do it.

There are many sources of fear, diverse reasons for having it, and some folks have one type but not the other. So, individuals will have many ways to overcome their fear. Understand yours, and your solutions. You’ll find a lot of good advice is publicly available.

Here is one solution: Develop the skill to make you able to perform unafraid. First practice how to compensate for the awful event: Practicing how to make a ghost disappear, how to roll out of an overbalanced handstand, or safely jump off a forward falling Pogo Stick. Second, now that the fear is gone, practice to build confidence and virtuosity. Then, you’ll be impressive!

Many have fears associated with public speaking. Even if you have a stutter, or a disability, or an appearance blemish; if you have a valid and useful message, the audience will listen. Know that you have a valuable contribution, focus on your contribution, not how frenemies might be seeking something to snark about. You are among professional colleagues now.

If you are afraid of forgetting your lines, and embarrassing yourself, use the presentation view as a guide. If you are afraid of saying something objectionable or ridiculed by your audience, preview the message with a friend.

We are all afraid of the awfulness that might happen. For some it is in making presentations. For some it is writing. It could be in facing difficult conversations, finding the process within the complexity of pipes, proposing a design, letting something slip through the cracks, mathematical modeling, or any of the things that need to be done.

The individual is responsible for overcoming their personal fear. But we need patient coaches that know the mechanisms of the task, and can help us develop the skills, behaviors, perceptions, and self-confidence that lead to proper technique, achievement, and success – both personal and professional actualization. We need coaching that can move us the next level of what is possible for us as an individual. We need friends that recognize how fear leads to underperformance, and who coach each other to acquire the fundamental skills, and to have the personal self-confidence to do it right. Help your teammates toward their best performance; and, let them coach you. Then, “Just Do It”.

Don’t let fear hold you back from contributing your best. Develop your potential. Surmount your fears. Also, don’t let your employees’ fear lead to your team’s underperformance. Provide a safe place for employees to develop. Develop your team’s potential.

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