

Fear: Friend or foe?

March 2015 Newsletter



“We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”¹ This famous quote by Franklin D. Roosevelt speaks to the power of fear — as well as your power to beat it.

Fear can be overwhelming. It can paralyze you and keep you from moving forward in life. Yet fear can also be an important teacher. You can make fear the very thing that motivates you to move on and confront the challenges of everyday life.

Facing fear gives you strength

Fear often comes down to this: You worry about losing control or feeling out of control. In either case, you do have the power to find a path through the fear to a place of greater wisdom or insight. Here’s how:

- **Monitor your inner dialogue.** We all talk to ourselves. First there’s the “inner critic”. This negative internal voice gives you messages like, “How could I be so stupid?”, “No one likes me” or “I’m not smart enough to do this.”

Then there’s the “inner compassionate witness”. This is your internal voice that’s supportive and kind. When it seems like your compassionate witness has taken a day off, you need to remind yourself that it’s equally a part of you. In fact, it’s your best friend. Your compassionate witness gives positive messages like, “Nice job!” and “Yes, I can!”

You also give yourself messages about fear like, “I’m afraid of presenting my business idea in front of others at a team meeting because they may not think it’s very good.” Or you can tell yourself something much more positive like, “I have a good idea and I bet others would like to hear about it.” Notice the messages you give yourself and see if you can make them more positive.

- **Figure out what the fear is about.** Is your fear reasonable? Or are old messages telling you not to take a risk? Are they voices from your childhood? What (or whose?) beliefs are the fears based on? Are they still relevant to who you are as a capable adult?
- **Test the reality.** If you’re afraid of presenting your idea, why not test the reality? Notice what happens when others speak in front of your team. Do they get laughed at or embarrassed? Are their ideas put down?

Thinking through the realities may help you to change your inner dialogue. Now you might think: “I’m going to present my idea at the meeting because it’s a good idea, I can do a good job explaining it and my team is open to hearing new thoughts.”

Likewise, check out the facts on other things that frighten you. Once you wrap your mind around them, you may be ready to test your fears.

- **Take sound chances and see where they get you.** Once you’re ready to challenge a fear, take a deep breath and try something a little scary. You’re likely to learn from your courage and move on to tackle other fears that might be keeping you from achieving all you could!

¹www.brainyquote.com