

Emotional Workouts



AUTHENTICALLY DEALING WITH YOUR
EMOTIONAL LIFE IN AN EVER-TURNING WORLD



By

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FEAR: Primal Fears, Bullshit Fears, and You

“The moment from certainty to uncertainty is what I call fear.”

-KRISHNAMURTI, *FREEDOM FROM THE UNKNOWN*

Every person has experienced a moment of fear. It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, or what you're doing — fear is a part of life and you have to deal with it. But here's the thing about fear: it can be the best gift you've ever been given. It can save your life (in fact, that's what it's designed to do). You just have to use it right. You have to use it as a sense, enabling you to discern real, primal fear (fire, a lion, or a mugger) from overprotective, bullshit fear (public speaking, attending social events, or even going after your dreams). Primal fear can save our lives, ensuring that we are still around to see tomorrow. Bullshit fear can dictate our lives if we let it, pushing us further and further from the life we actually want to live.

The tricky part is that bullshit fear can feel an awful lot like primal fear. Public speaking, for example, won't kill you — but try telling that to someone whose heart starts pounding at the very idea of walking up on stage. So how can we tell the difference? Start with physicality. Are you physically in danger? Is your life or livelihood being immediately threatened by illness, violence, or loss? No? Then there's a good chance you're not experiencing primal fear. As far as litmus tests go, it's pretty simple.

In order to better understand bullshit fear, let's take a look at what writer and philosopher Krishnamurti has to say. If we examine the quote at the opening of this chapter, we see that Krishnamurti defines fear as the moment we shift from knowing what will come next to having no idea what to expect. It's the space between certainty and uncertainty, and it's in that moment that we might feel tempted to just hang back where we're comfortable. After all, fear doesn't feel good! But if we let fear control our lives we'll stop evolving. We'll start playing safe. We'll stop being the authentic selves we're meant to be. We'll be ruled by fear instead of understanding its service and using it as a torch to guide our lives. And when that happens, fear can cripple us.

Fear can dictate our decisions, no matter how big or small. It can stop you from writing that poem you want to write. It can stop you from asking out the beautiful woman you regularly see on your morning coffee run. It can stop you from speaking up when your feelings are hurt. And it can stop you from going after the things you want most, the things that will make your life richer and more authentic and more YOU. Any perceived fear — that moment when you no longer know what to expect — has the potential to take away your agency and ruin your decision making. And the decisions you make create the life you live.

Conversely, imagine you could not only discern your bullshit fears, but also manage to get a grip on them and put them to work for you. Every potential fearful situation would become an opportunity to make better decisions and build a better future. Because once you stop letting fear dictate your little decisions, you can remove its influence from your big ones. And suddenly, without you even noticing, things start happening for you. Things start falling in line. You take that first step toward what you want. Then you take another. You get the girl. You write the poem. You stand up for yourself. Finally, you get to live.



THE EMOTIONAL WORKOUT

THINK OF FEAR AS YOUR OVERPROTECTIVE BODYGUARD — HE'S REALLY HELPFUL AND WELL INTENTIONED; YOU JUST HAVE TO LEARN TO KEEP HIM IN CHECK. THE WORKOUT IS SIMPLE. WHEN YOU FEEL FEAR WASH OVER YOUR BRAIN AND BODY, TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1

Pause.

2

Ask yourself: "Am I in danger?"

3

If yes, this is a primal fear. Take the necessary steps to ensure your safety. If your answer is no, then you're dealing with a bullshit fear. Mentally remind yourself: "I am safe. Nothing that I can't handle is going to happen. I've handled worse."

4

Internally smile or physically smile. It changes your chemistry.

5

Mentally "thank" your fear for showing up — it does work for you, after all. Then tell your fear that its services are not required right now. You've got this.

6

Return to the present moment and the task in front of you.

7

Celebrate (internally or externally) wins as they come, whether it's accomplishing something you set out to do, or even just taking a first step in a new direction.



THE KEY



Let's look at these steps a little more closely. The first step is all about discerning the source of your fear and whether you are, in fact, in danger. Remember: primal fear kicks in for a reason! If there's an out-of-control bus careening straight toward you, listen to your fear and save your life. But if there is no danger, then chances are you're dealing with a bullshit fear. You'll be amazed by how much calmer you might feel simply by consciously recognizing that you're not in real danger. The next steps are designed to take that reassurance even further.

Reminding yourself that you are safe and that you are capable of taking on whatever comes next will further calm your brain and body (which can actually go into "fight or flight" mode even in response to bullshit fear). And remember what Krishnamurti said: fear is the moment between certainty and uncertainty — so by assuring yourself that you will be able to manage whatever comes next, even if you don't know what it is yet, you will fortify yourself for forward progress. Now, follow it up with an actual, physical smile. You'll feel better and boost your endorphins naturally.

Finally, thank your fear. Think to yourself: "Thank you. You're here because what I'm doing matters to me." Your fear is a tool that can point you in the direction of the things you desire. After all, if you didn't care about the outcome, why would you fear what it might look like? Now, whatever you were doing (thinking about talking to someone, etc.), return to the present moment (by focusing briefly on your breath or the sensation of your toes). Focus on the task in front of you. Now take that first step.

Here's the key to managing your fear: Stop trying to conquer it. This emotional workout is not about beating fear into submission. It's about being best friends with, understanding it, and using it to your advantage. Fear will always be there and we want it to be — we just want to make sure we don't allow our bullshit fears to dictate our decisions. Instead, put them to work for you!





GOALS

My current fear is _____ write down your exact words

Is my fear is primal fear? (Circle one): Y / N

What is my current goal?

How is fear in the way?

What will I do this week despite fear?

How many times will I work on my plan this week? _____



ESTIMATED WEIGHT SAVINGS

Make friends with fear 3x this week =

A 2 POUND WEIGHT LOSS

