

FEAR AINT WHAT IT USED TO BE

Do we really have the right perspective on 'fear'? How do we befriend fear and succeed without it? With the focus on unacceptably high levels of mental ill-health and anxiety pervading our workplaces right now, we need to find better ways to work. Fear has too much power - enough to change our minds and our chemistry. But it doesn't need to be what it used to be, this great bogey 'Fear'.

Awareness is powerful An executive banking manager was having frequent panic attacks in his car on the way to work. They were so strong he would have to pull over and wait until he was under control again. Sweat-stained and weak, he would turn up for work and try to start his day. Ironically, he was one of the best performers; people liked him, he had a great leadership style, yet he was recently paralysed by fear. His manager engaged me to coach him.

As I listened to his story about what was going on, he used words like 'checking on the troops', 'wondering where the next bullets will come from', 'seeing what's happening in the trenches.' Yes, he came to war every day - in *his* mind. He changed his view of work and his language and the fear dissolved. (And he gave me permission to tell his success story.)

Beyond courage There was a time when we drew on enormous courage to overcome fear. We had to push through it and keep going regardless. Managers and overseers used fear to propel people forward and then rewarded them for achieving results in the face of that fear.

The downside of this is the spectre of fear continued to loom large and we feared when it might resurface. Fear was apparently beyond our control. Yet we came to rely on it to get us up and going. A strange paradox....

Learning to succeed - easefully Fortunately, with the positive psychology movement, advances in neuroplasticity, and the more common use of eastern wisdom practices, fear ain't what it used to be. We know we are something greater.

We have the skills to dissolve fear rather than kill it off by slaying it with our determination and grit. We can, among many things:

- breathe it away using mindfulness
- stay present, be in the moment
- use EFT tapping and kinesiology
- be aware of our thinking and change our mental associations
- meditate
- make changes to better support our lives
- make changes to our beliefs
- acknowledge our strengths and build stronger self-trust

Success is easier now - if we let it be. We don't have to create or accept such huge challenges to our progress. Fear is useful when we need to know our lives are in jeopardy - and it is the first place our brain will go when it perceives a threat. But we can then bring our executive brain on line and find a way to rationalise and strategise before the fear takes over.

Choose in the moment To bridge the gap between our old, dinosaur life-preserving part of the brain and our cultivated, logical part, we have a moment of choice. In conscious leadership, with practices that keep us deeply in touch with our inner strength as our source - our 'Wise One Within' as Dr Geoff Schwartz calls it - that moment is the perfect time to anchor ourselves in our self-trust. In that moment we can choose to fall into the path of fear, or, picture a different reality and set of responses. We can behave differently by dissolving the feeling of fear into a better feeling of anticipation or excitement.

The challenge Leaders can no longer use fear-based management to motivate people into desired behaviours. They are in danger of being complicit in contributing to the ill-health of those they lead, and themselves. Rather, they are responsible for ensuring everyone thrives. So what do we do instead?

The new way ahead There is an old saying worth remembering, 'Look the monster in the face.' When we build self-awareness and see what is driving us, we have the opportunity to unmask the monster and make it our friend. Start by being more conscious in the moment. Have a tool kit of skills and methods to draw on spontaneously. See the world in a different way. Find perspective. Build self-trust.

Ultimately we need to be motivated by our vision and values, and what brings us meaning and purpose. That is what truly matters to our soul. When we can take charge of fear and let it have its rightful place in the right proportions, confident, conscious leadership will be the outcome.

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