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Changing Fear into Excitement

By Ted Schredd

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Fear scares people. That's what it's supposed to do; it's just a matter of how much and how often do we really need to be scared? Basically, there are two kinds of fear. Real fear allows you to save your butt in challenging situations (like being chased by a predator or facing imminent danger). Then there are imagined fears—which hold you back from experiencing life. Imagined fears may come from a previous unpleasant experience, other people's fears or bad information. The way your brain sees it there is no difference between an imaginary fear and a real one.

Fear can provide stress and physical anxiety as you prepare for new experiences. It can cause you to lack good judgment or to do irrational things. Chicken-heartedness can turn into terror and complete immobilization. Or you can change your panic into an exciting edge when stepping out of your comfort zone. What's scary for some is sheer delight for others. Confronting your fears will give you an incredible sense of satisfaction and confidence.

Your happiness is directly related to whether fear runs your activity schedule or your courage does. In a modern world, fear has minimal uses, especially if the perceived concern has no basis in reality. When you are full of fear, you end up worrying about events that will never even happen. We worry about the environment, the safety of the neighborhood or world peace. We worry about murderers, terrorists and the stock markets. Some people call it worrying; others call it being realistic. But worrying is a waste of time; it has never paid a single bill nor stopped a hurricane. If the situation or problem can be remedied, there is no point worrying about it. If there is nothing you can do about your problems, there is no point worrying either.

Think about the fears and worries in your life and how they affect your fun level. You don't have to deny your fears, just question if they're truly looking out for your best interests. Are you focusing on what could go wrong instead of what could go right? So many people are consumed by worry, hoping that one day their lives will get better, as another day slips away. Instead of seeing the worst-case scenario in your mind, see the best-case scenario. Become what motivational speaker Brian Tracey calls an inverse paranoid. Become convinced that there are hundreds of people waiting around every corner to show you some form of fun or pleasure. Become paranoid that the world is out to do you good.

Now, fun people do not deny their fears. Are they scared when they face their fears? You bet, but devoted delight detectors make it a habit of facing their fears instead of tucking their tails behind their

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legs and hiding under the bed. They change their fears from a debilitating annoyance into waves of adrenaline and excitement. When you face your fears, whether you succeed or not, you are a winner. You are a winner because you have chosen to be motivated by your passion for living and not by fear. The way to counteract your fears and worries is to gain knowledge, which gives you courage. Use wisdom, not worries, when traipsing out into the world. If you were to head out hiking in the mountains, would you worry that you could fall off a cliff, become lost, get eaten by a bear or get hit by an avalanche? These are all possible scenarios, but only remotely possible. The more you worry about it, the more likely you are to create it. If you stay away from the cliffs, take a map and a compass, avoid taping salmon to your body and stay out of the avalanche zones, you'll be fine.

We do so many dangerous things in our everyday lives and yet we worry about a little adventure. What about crossing the street? Do you see yourself getting pegged by a bus? Of course you don't. So when we consider new or unknown activities, why do we create such terrible visions? Chances for a major

injury are much greater crossing a busy street than traipsing in the mountains. If something does happen while you're enjoying the world, at least you're living! Watching TV and eating potato chips may be safe but you will get fat and it's boring.

If you say no to snorkeling in the ocean because you're scared of sharks or sea monsters, you're the one who loses. You will never see the magic of the underwater world. Yes, there is that chance that a water monster might go for a snack while you're splashing around, but the chances are so slim. You have a better chance of being hit by lightning or winning an Olympic gold medal. Thousands if not millions of people have been in the ocean and survived. Why would you be singled out for tragedy? You will never be able to remove every potential danger, but you can diminish the threat by following the golden rule of adventure: safety first. If there's a way to lower the risk factor, do it. If there's protective gear, wear it. If there's a need for common sense, then use it. Take the proper steps to ensure your safety. Do you need a life jacket, a helmet or special training before you try this activity? What about learning from a professional? Yes, every year, a few people die while they're out having fun, but often that's because they haven't been smart about safety precautions. So be smart. Dying because of stupidity makes you stupid and dead. And being both dead AND stupid is definitely embarrassing. Avoid at all costs. Let's say you want to go kayaking. Kayaking is a much more enjoyable experience if you know how to swim and how to self-rescue. Learning to minimize the danger of any activity will help you face the world. The more you understand something, the less you will fear it. The more people you meet who are doing that activity, the more confidence you'll have in saying, "They're no better than me—I can do this!" You may find that this activity you've perceived as treacherous isn't that dangerous after all.

So you've gained some knowledge and you've made arrangements for a safe experience, but you're still too scared to get on the roller coaster or get out on the dance floor. Then turn your fear into excitement. Feel the fear and do it anyway. Be thankful that you have this highly tuned system that recognizes danger and lets your senses sharpen. Let it send tingles to the tips of your toes and enjoy the burst of energy. Fear will multiply your excitement sensations. You may be scared now, but when you come out the other side, you will feel fantastic, confident, proud and reliving your wonderful adventure. Another positive twist on being scared is that the more scared you are, the more intense your pleasure will be during and after your fun activity.

Most of your fears are imagined and should be treated as imaginary. Learn to distinguish the fears that are valid and those that are not. The next time you feel scared, challenge your fear and the thing you fear will disappear. Ask yourself, "What would I do if I wasn't feeling fear?" then act accordingly. When

you confront your fears, astonishing things will happen. Remember you are the master and you are in control.

Each time you challenge your fears, you add another brick to a solid foundation for happiness. Each tiny little fear that you face and conquer will give you courage against all your other fears. If you're unable to take control of your fears or have some kind of panic disorder, go and seek professional help. Moving past unreasonable fears will give you astonishing amounts of self-respect, confidence and satisfaction. Use courage and knowledge to assist you in your journey. If there is a fun activity that you want to try but are afraid, make a plan to conquer your fears. Investigate it, take some lessons, learn what you can, turn your fear into excitement, pretend to be brave and then go for it. Who runs your life, unfounded fears or wonderful you?

Ted Schredd has been a fun researcher for fifteen years. He has been featured on radio, television, and print articles across Canada. This article is an excerpt from his latest book "Gramma Knows the F Word" How adults can discover more fun in their lives. His books are available at www.Amazon.com or www.discoverfun.com

The Top 10 Helpful Things to Tell Someone Who's in a Difficult Transition

By Susan Dunn

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1. You're changing, and things around you are changing, but the Core You is still there.
2. Nothing lasts forever.
3. Think back on all the successful transitions you've had --- adolescence, first job, marriage, moving.
4. We don't fear change, we fear the unknown.
5. You don't have to make a decision right now.
6. Feel, felt, found. I know how you feel ... I felt that way ... here's what I found.
7. Study people who have successfully maneuvered the transition you're undertaking. Use them as models.
8. Periods of introspection are normal; there are times when you won't be taking action and that's fine.
9. Transitions are incredible opportunities for growth.
10. Use me as the North Star as you head out into uncharted waters.

Susan Dunn is a personal and professional development coach. <mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc> for FREE ezine.



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