



When Fear Limits Us

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One of the easiest buttons to push on a person is the Fear Button. Have you ever thought about how fear affects the quality of your life? Does it limit you? Does it keep you safe? Let's explore ...

The questions you need to ask yourself when that Fear Button gets pressed are:

- What do you fear?
- How do those fears impact your life?
- When do other people's fears impact your life?
- How do you reset your buttons when facing those fears?

What do you fear?

Your business and career are often major sources of fear – will you get that raise, will your contract be renewed, does your boss like you? Your family, friends, and marriage also raise hairs on the back of your neck – will there be enough money for the kids to go to college, will your spouse still love you at 45, how will your friends respond to the news of your divorce? What about society or cultural issues? The world economy, world peace, and getting through security at the airport can all be major sources of fear and anxiety.

We all have fears. Some are short-lived – *How am I going to get through this traffic jam and make it to my interview on time?* – and some are longer-term – *Will I have enough money to retire?* Many are at some point in between. Very often, fear limits the way you live your life. You may find yourself responding to your fear instead of following your passion. If you fail to reset your Fear Button, you may be left asking yourself, *What if?*

When do other people's fears impact your life?

How other people think and behave has a great impact on our lives. A simple fear that goes unaddressed can spread like wildfire through a community, and through the world. Remember the story of Chicken Little? In his ignorance and paranoia he spread fear through an entire community, because the immediacy of the falling sky eliminated the possibility of anyone's taking time to verify his claim. Listening to your true feelings or thoughts on the matter and hand, rather than responding to the influence of other people's fears, is of paramount importance in the resetting of your Fear Button.

Do you find yourself conforming to other people's rules because of their fears or because of the things they have told you that you "should" fear? Is your fact finding and intuition ruling your life or your communities fear based beliefs? Do you find yourself listening to

Chicken Little, or do you take the time to look up? Consider the following train of thought, and how the fears of a community rapidly become personal and specific.

What does national security really mean? How does that impact my family? How are my personal rights affected? Will my children be safe at school? In what ways will the budget cuts impact social services? What about our department, or our community project? If taxes go up, how will I afford my home, tuition payments, or to keep my business?

How do you reset your buttons when facing those fears?

First, you'll need to get in touch with the Fear Button.

Identify which button or combinations of buttons are being pushed. Is it your fear of being taken advantage of or losing control? Are you fearful because you may no longer be accepted, respected, or liked? Does this fear play on your sense of security or safety? Is your fear threatening your belief of what is right?

Take a deep breath and drink a glass of water. Breathing is very important when feeling fear. We tend to take shorter, shallow breaths from our chest, as opposed to full, deep breaths from our diaphragm. Stop and take as full a breath as possible. Expand your belly like a balloon while taking in lots of oxygen through your nose. Count to 10 as you release the air through your mouth, while deflating the balloon so that your stomach almost touches your spine. Do this three times. Next loosen your shoulders by rolling them front and back, lifting them up and down. Turn your head slowly from side to side, drop your chin to your chest and then slowly lift your chin into the air so that you feel the stretch in your neck.

Remind yourself that you may not be able to control how you feel but you can control how you think and act. Face the fear and begin to consider your action plan or worst case solution. Revisit your fear and ask yourself, *What can I do in this moment to alleviate this fear?* Most fears are able to fester and grow due to lack of communication.

Make a communication plan so that you can be more informed. By having more information you will be better equipped to determine if this fear is real how it can be resolved. Consider the source, not only the message but the *messenger*. Initiate the type of conversation you need to have so that it will help to diminish or remove your fear. Find a source that will provide you with the information you need in a manner in which you will be most receptive to it.

Ask yourself which method of communication is most appealing to you and then find a source who can deliver it. Consider the following criteria:

- Who can deliver a direct conversation and get to the bottom of this situation?

- Do you need more of a “feeling conversation”, one where you feel safe to discuss your thoughts, feelings and ideas without concern over a loss of approval?
- Can you schedule time in the immediate future to discuss your fears over coffee, tea or lunch?
- Will you be able to steer your conversation in a friendly manner while creating a step by step plan?
- What resource will give you the most logical, factual information without a lot of emotion?

Sometimes you are your best source; the conversation you need to have is with you. You might even choose one of the methods from the list above. Do you need to be more creative in formulating your plan? Will a step by step written plan feel more solid and realistic? Can you find time to take yourself for a walk with a tape recorder?

The longer you hold onto the fear, the longer you internalize it, worry about it, fixate on it, the more power you give it. The more powerful the fear the more paralyzing it becomes. You end up placing far more limitations on your life because of that fear.

It's your life, and to the best of our knowledge you only get one. Why not live it fully? Limit your fears before they limit you.

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