



Fear - How to Confront and Kill it So That You Can Succeed and Reach Your Potential

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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One of the most damaging and limiting things in life is fear. Every week clients tell me about how they are restricted or stopped by things that they think present more risk than they are willing to confront.

Fear forms the bars of the cages that hold us back. You see, when we are afraid of things, we do not take chances.

Sometimes people have social phobias and are afraid to ask someone who attracts them to go on a date. Usually the person who is afraid is so focussed on his or her own inadequacies that the characteristics and personal assets have to offer are minimized or completely negated.

I have seen people give up many opportunities in relationships, career, or personal growth because of fear. Often people do not want to risk what they have, even if it does not bring pleasure, unless they think that there is a guarantee that the new direction will be better than what they have. Then, when they don't take a chance, they "beat themselves up" for years, thinking that perhaps they made the wrong choice.

Sometimes people have negative experiences which cause them to take a position on a topic. Children who have been bitten by insects in their youth can carry extreme fears into adulthood. A person who has been robbed can be paranoid that they will have a repeat experience. Those who have had a romantic breakup can swear off dating.

There are occasions when people are afraid of things that have not happened to them. Those who view tornadoes or tsunamis on television might experience vicarious traumatization and be afraid that this weather pattern will appear in their location even if there is absolutely no chance of this.

One of the best ways to deal with fear is to confront it head on. Write down the fear you have and then identify the worst thing that could happen. Next, decide what options you would have to deal with this. You will likely be surprised at how unrealistic your fear has been and how capable you might be in dealing with it. The Boy Scouts motto is "Be Prepared" and this is good advice for everyone. The more detailed your plans are, the better possibilities you have of dealing with your fears.

I had a friend who was very afraid of driving in Calgary. She was asked to go to a meeting at the University but was planning to say that she wasn't able to go. I reminded her of what a capable and intelligent person she was and how she had conquered much bigger problems in her life in the past. The friend said "But Calgary is so big and there are so many streets". I suggested that she would only be driving on one of them at a time.

We began making a plan. First she studied a map and laid out the best route to take. The meeting was to be held on a Monday morning and so we planned for her to travel on Sunday as the area would be less busy and she wouldn't have the time pressures. She would drive to Calgary, go to the University, find the available parking and then locate the room where the meeting was to be held. Then she would stay in a nearby hotel for the night and feel confident the next morning about how to get to where she needed to be.

How thrilled I was on Sunday evening to receive a telephone call from my friend who was ecstatic about arriving in the University parking lot without any trouble! Fears will grow if you let them but they will also shrink if you confront them.

Think about the things that prevent you from being who you want to be or from going where you want to go. With some planning and a few action steps you will soon be able to experience the freedom that you have desired!