

To Overcome Fear and Indecision

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All of us would agree that ships moored in the harbour are always safe, but, that of course is not what ships are meant for. It is true of everything in general in this world. If one is fearful and because of which indecisive and if one keeps putting off taking a decision or action - in other words if one remains in the harbour like the ship and never leaves the dock, then he might be safe for a while at least, but that is not what life is all about.

All of us - successful people, rich people, famous people, Presidents, Prime Ministers, lawyers, judges, celebrities, highly acclaimed sports people, corporate honchos, even Kings and Queens – suffer from fear in some form or the other at least for sometime occasionally, if not always.

Unlike other living organisms in this world, God has created human beings to do more than eat, drink, procreate and stay alive.

We humans are unique in this world in the sense that we are blessed with inquisitive, adventurous, calculating and creative mind. We can desire and decide whatever things we would want to become; we can even command that we leave the harbour and venture out on to the high seas in search of progress and betterment.

I have mentioned earlier that all of us experience fear in some form or the other at some point of time. Fear of what others might think of us, fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of loss of money, name, fame, fear of disaster, fear of death etc.

We must all remember that the only way to understand about fear is this; to tackle it head-on, which more often than not means having only to overcome fear by taking action physically or do the thing we fear doing. Taking fear head-on or lacking it boils down to doing the very same thing that we are afraid of.

Generally, we, human beings are influenced by so many factors depending upon our nature of upbringing and family backgrounds and possess a tendency to make mountains of molehills - at least every once in a while if not always. Often we allow our fears and doubts to have their sway over us. And, we may sometimes claim that our “inner voice” is constantly trying to hold us back from doing this or that and we try to justify that the “Inner voice” is the culprit which is dictating terms to us to do a thing at a particular time even though we are otherwise bold enough to do a thing or that! But in actual practice we are our worst enemies.

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Confronting fear at times is inevitable and if one tries to run away from it, it would compound the problem. This is not to say that the sense of fear would always play the role of a monster as some people would make it out to be.

Trying to run away from fear would definitely lead to indecision as our thought-process gets clouded with fear and anxiety. Sometimes fear becomes a good thing as it would protect us from falling into the trap of harmful consequences which may be waiting in the wings to capture us. For example, whenever our body experiences severe sense of fear in the presence of danger or when our body experiences shock or cold or fatigue, our body produces a hormone which the doctors call "adrenaline" which in its resultant effect increases our blood pressure and heartbeat. This increased blood pressure and heart beat give our human body sufficient amount of oxygen which is more than welcome for our strength and vitality. The hormone called "adrenaline" causes the body to generate glucose which gives additional energy which prevents us from the sense of escape or fight. Therefore, we can positively claim that all fear is not bad. For example, if we are in a dense forest and come across a very hungry wild animal like a tiger or lion we would definitely experience extreme sense of fear, but that of course is not the fear we are discussing here. We are actually talking about a different sense of personal fear that holds us back from accomplishing our potential and set goals.

Fear always leads to indecision as a consequence in human beings. Both fear and indecision are debilitating and these sap us of our energy and courage often. Fear and

indecision prevent a great many people from even attempting to take the required efforts, let alone achieving. Fear therefore is a notorious obstacle standing in the way of man's success. An American philosopher by name William James said "There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision." Lot of people do not even manage to conquer fear. Swami Vivekananda once said that "we must try to conquer fear and anger as we human beings are provided with nerves of steel and lion's courage". But we are not taking the required action because of doubts in our own capabilities and mental strengths leading to indecision. We individuals being our own enemies always vacillate and expect something to happen from Heaven, little realizing that we are our own stumbling blocks. But at the same time we can generate the sense of happiness and joy and also possess the courage and potential for doing so. The following poem written by some anonymous poet strengthens the point.

"An enemy I had whose face I stoutly
strive to know,

For hard he dogged my steps unseen
wherever I did go

My plans he baulked, my aims he foiled,
he blocked my onward way

When for some lofty goal I toiled, he
grimly told "Nay"

One night I seized him and held him fast
from him the veil did draw,

I looked upon his face at last and lo myself
I saw."

Frankly and truly, we are our own worst
enemies even though we have the potential

of being our own best friend. Under no circumstances should we allow ourselves to be swayed by the sense of fear to take a hold on us because sense of fear will try to overpower us and beat us into submission. Just try to understand the story of a small boy narrated by Swamy Chinmayananda during one of his discourses on Gita in Chennai in 1962. "A small boy of 11 years was walking past a charming church on a dark evening but otherwise a pleasant evening. When the boy was walking very casually and enjoying the pleasant weather and the beautiful surroundings, he was whistling a melodious tune of his liking, it was very fine then. But when he looked over into the church yard and noticed some shadows and grey stones he stopped whistling and quickened his pace. After a few strides his fear took hold of him and he suddenly got the urge to run. And as he quickened his run his fear turned into terror." Here the point to be understood is that if we give into fear it will overwhelm us. If we give an inch of space to fear it will take a kilometre. Ultimately fear will control us instead of being controlled by us.

Everyone should remind oneself of the fact that we human beings possess the ability to control our thoughts and attitudes. It is within our capacity to decide how we will react in a given situation. Also we should understand that it is not so much to know as to what happens to us that makes a difference, but how we react or deal with what happens to us. Dr. Victor E. Frankl is the author of "Man's Search For Meaning" his best selling book. In that fantastic and gripping book he describes how he as a psychiatrist survived years of deprivation, cruelty and torture at the hands of the Nazis in the II World War. Being a Jew, he endured unspeakable horrors in the Nazis concentration

camps of Auschwitz and Dachau where he witnessed and was himself subjected to the most horrifying as well as terrifying atrocities. Further he describes how he had to put up with innumerable difficult situations. He emphasises in his book "The last of the human freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances". Dr. Frankl learnt that he could hardly control his surroundings or the ways in which he was subjected to inhumanism, but he could control his reactions "to what was happening to him". When we keep Dr. Frankl's advice in mind whenever we face doubts, inner fear of trepidation, whenever we find us harbouring negative thoughts we can control them and would be successful in changing the fearful as well as negative thoughts into positive ones.

Ralph Waldo Emerson while understanding the secret of positive thinking and the power of our mind said, "what lies behind us and what lies before us pale into insignificance when compared to what lies within us". Let us then reiterate that we can control our thinking and attitudes. Let us also recall what Shakespeare said, "our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt".

To reinforce the point of how we can control fear, take the example found in the Biblical story of David and Goliath. During the reign of King Saul, the Israelites and the Philistines prepared to go for war against each other. The two armies camped on just opposite hills with a valley separating them. For about 40 days there was an impasse between the two armies as both sides were waiting for the other to begin the attack or retreat and lose the advantage of fighting from a high ground.

And during the period of impasse the Philistine fighter Goliath who was over 270 cms tall came out of his camp and went down the valley to challenge the Israelites. Every morning and evening Goliath would bellow his challenge across to the Israelites' camp mocking and daring them to bring out their champion to fight against him and determine the outcome of the war by a single combat between the champions of both sides. Again for 40 days whenever the Israelites saw Goliath, the Bible says they all ran away from him in great fear. But one day when the shepherd boy David went to the Israeli camp to bring supplies to his elder brothers, Goliath shouted with his usual defiant challenge and David armed only with his faith, his slingshot and a few pebbles persuaded the king to let him go out and fight the Philistine giant Goliath. The rest of the story is history. The main point in relating this account is to highlight the fact again that fear prevents a lot of people from attempting anything. The perceptible difference between the shepherd boy David and Goliath was one of faith or attitude.

You all know that David went on to become the King of Israel.

When it comes to overcoming fear and indecision we have to remember and appreciate that there is nothing in this world which is as

powerful as prayer.

I am sure that you would all agree with me if I say that change or the threat of it causes apprehension, anxiety, worry, doubt and uncertainty. Fear for one's safety, fear of the unknown, fear of making the wrong decision, fear of failure or making a mistake should never be allowed to take hold of us. Change is inevitable in this mundane world. Change has to take place as otherwise there would be no progress. Change is the spice of life. Because of our unfounded doubts and concerns we may feel worried or even frightened by some changes. But the only way to overcome them would be to jump into action and work them to death. We should not be like the caterpillar which looked up and saw a butterfly, then turned to his brother and said "Hub, there is no way you would get me up there in one of those things". We individually on our part have to plan and prepare for change properly. In this context, I am reminded of a popular African proverb, "plan purposefully, prepare prayerfully, proceed positively and pursue persistently". It may not be out of place to point out here what the author Mr. Corrie Ten Boom said "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It only saps today of its strength."



Do the thing you fear to do and keep on doing it...that is the quickest and surest way ever yet discovered to conquer fear.
-Dale Carnegie

Many of our fears are tissue-paper-thin, and a single courageous step would carry us clear through them. - Brendan Francis

Obstacles are like wild animals. They are cowards but they will bluff you if they can. If they see you are afraid of them... they are liable to spring upon you; but if you look them squarely in the eye, they will slink out of sight. -Orison Swett Marden

Where ever fear shadows.... that always means there is a light shining somewhere. ~ Jonathan Santos

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