

FIGHT **YOUR** FEARS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Don't Let Fear Hold You Back

- **All of us struggle with fear and worry from time to time.** In fact, in many cases, fear is actually a good and healthy thing. It causes us to wear seatbelts and try to eat healthy. It's also natural to be concerned about our health, bank account, job status, children, and more.
- **But if fear gets out of control, it can take over and prevent us from enjoying life.** When we're consumed by fear, we can't be present for others or do the things we love. It also keeps us from taking any risks. If we're afraid, we won't start new businesses, write books, or initiate relationships.
- **If we're going to successfully navigate the often-difficult world in which we live, we need effective strategies for coping with worry and fear.** We must learn how to overcome our fears, so we can move toward the things we desire.
- **In this guide, you'll discover proven strategies for facing and overcoming your fears.** Ready? Let's dive in.

What Exactly Is Fear?

- **Fear is a biological response to an internal or external stimulus.**
 - **A biological response.** When you're afraid, your body goes into "fight or flight" mode. Your heart rate goes up and your adrenaline increases.
 - **To an internal or external stimulus.** Fear can arise from within or without. Thinking about losing your job (internal stimulus) causes fear. Coming face-to-face with a grizzly bear (external stimulus) also causes fear.
- **What you'll probably discover is that most of your fears are internally created.** You are afraid because of what you *think* will happen rather than what is

actually happening. What you feel is real but the circumstances you're imagining are not.

- **When you understand the true nature of fear, it becomes easier to overcome.** You are able to closely examine your anxiety and determine if there is any substance to it.

Change Your Biology

- **When you're afraid, your body is ramped up, and it can be very difficult to control your thinking.** When you dispel the physical effects of fear, it becomes much easier to dispel the mental effects of fear. So, how do you change your biology?
 - **Exercise.** When you work out, your body releases endorphins, which make you feel good. If you're feeling worried, go for a brisk walk or hit the gym.
 - **Do breathing exercises.** When you're anxious, you breathe rapidly, which raises your heart rate, increases muscle tension, causes dizziness, and more. Focus on changing your breathing patterns.
 - **Relax your muscles.** Use progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) - a technique for releasing muscles that have been tensed due to anxiety.
 - **Eat and sleep right.** As much as possible, try to eat healthy foods and avoid processed ones. Shoot for somewhere between seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

Identify Your Fears

- **Before you can overcome fear, you must be able to identify it.** If you're not clear regarding the source of your anxiety, you'll struggle to resolve it.
- **To identify your fears, ask yourself a series of questions:**
 - What am I afraid of?
 - Why am I afraid of it?
 - What do I try not to think about?
 - When do I feel afraid?
 - What emotions do I feel?
 - What negative outcomes am I envisioning?
 - What pictures do I have in my head about this situation?
- **You may need to work a bit to get to the bottom of your fears.** It's common to have smaller fears stacked on top of a much larger one. Work to determine the root fear that is causing all your other anxieties.
- **Next, become aware of all the different ways your fear is affecting your life.** Is it:
 - Causing you constant emotional distress?
 - Keeping you from doing things you want to do?
 - Hampering your relationships?
- **The goal of this exercise is to bring you face-to-face with the consequences of your fear.** When you see how worry and anxiety damage your life and hold you back, you become much more motivated to take action.

Practice Worst-Case and Best-Case Thinking

- **When you feel afraid, think about the worst-case scenario.** Now, what are the odds of that *actually* happening? Probably pretty low. The worst case very rarely happens. When you engage in worst-case thinking, you'll often discover that the worst isn't nearly as bad as you think it is.
- **After thinking through the worst-case, think through the best-case.** When you envision the good things that will come your way, it motivates you to take action in the face of your fears. You are able to see what you will miss if you let your worries control you.

Focus on What You Can Control

- **How much time and energy do you spend worrying about things you can't control?** A huge portion of life is out of your control, and if you focus on those things, you'll be constantly worried. For the most part, you can't control:
 - The actions and responses of others
 - What others think
 - Aging
 - People's opinions of you
- **Worrying about the things you can't control is a waste of time.** When you fear things outside of your control, you have less energy to use on the things where you can make a difference. What can you control?
 - How you respond
 - What you think about
 - The ways you treat others
 - The information you consume

- **When you focus on what you can control, your fears will significantly lessen, and your life will significantly improve.** When you find yourself dealing with fear, stop and ask yourself, *“What things are under my control?”* Once you identify those things, give all your time and energy to them.

Choose Gratitude

- **Fear is almost always rooted in a scarcity mentality.** You’re afraid that you’ll lack:
 - Love
 - Respect
 - Money
 - Health
 - Possessions
 - And more
- **Gratitude completely shifts your perspective, fixing your gaze on the things you already have.** It’s hard for gratitude and fear to coexist. When you feel fear beginning to rise in you, embrace gratitude. Look for ways to be grateful that are specifically related to your anxiety.
- **Some simple ways to practice gratitude include:**
 - Keep a daily gratitude journal.
 - Send a weekly text message of gratefulness to a friend.
 - Send out handwritten note cards once a month.
 - Tell your loved ones why you love them.
 - Embrace every challenge as an opportunity to grow.
 - Post about gratefulness on social media.

Practice Mindfulness and Meditation

- **Fear consistently takes you out of the present.** Instead of focusing on the here and now, you are constantly worried about what could happen in the future. Practicing mindfulness and meditation keeps you firmly rooted in the present. All of your energy and focus is given to the current moment.
- **Mindfulness simply means being aware of and savoring the present moment without thought of anything else.** Meditation is a specific practice that helps you grow in mindfulness. Although there are many different forms of meditation, they all involve focusing on the present for a set period of time.
- **If you've never practiced meditation, there are numerous tools available that provide expert guidance:**
 - **Headspace** has a huge number of guided meditations, sleep sounds, mini-meditations, and more.
 - **Calm** offers numerous meditations of varying lengths, breathing exercises, nature sounds, sleep stories, and much more.
 - **Aura** offers personalized meditations, music, stories, and coaching based on your mood.
 - **Glo** combines yoga and meditation, allowing you to strengthen body and mind simultaneously.

Schedule Your Worries

- **One of the big challenges in dealing with fear is that it's always present.** On top of this, many people find it difficult to turn their brains off. Once anxiety has wormed its way into their minds, they can't stop thinking about it.

- **One technique recommended by psychologists is actually scheduling a time when you will think about the things that worry you.**
 - Set aside 15-30 minutes per day.
 - During that time, write down everything that worries you. You don't have to create solutions. You just need to get things down on paper.
 - If you start to worry about something at any other point in the day, tell yourself that you will think about it during your "worry time".
- **In the beginning, you may find it challenging to put off your worries, but over time it will become easier.** An additional benefit of planned worry is that it increases your sense of control over your life.

Get Support

- **Dealing with fear is a lonely battle, often waged just in your mind.** This is why getting support from others is crucial if you regularly deal with worry. When you discuss what you're thinking with others, you'll begin to see your worries from a different perspective.
- **Some ways to get needed support are:**
 - **Talk to a friend.** Unburden yourself to someone you know well and can trust.
 - **Join an online support group.** There are a number of online organizations specifically designed to help you cope with anxiety.

- **Join a local support group.** Depending on where you live, there may be in-person anxiety support groups which you can join.
- **Don't be embarrassed if you struggle mightily with fear.** Every person has their own share of worries and anxieties. Talking to others about your struggles can go a long way in helping you make progress.

Talk to a Therapist

- **Therapists can help you identify what you're afraid of and then guide you forward.** Using both their extensive training and experience, they can give you specific exercises that will help you overcome your fears.
- How do you know if you should go to a therapist? The American Psychological Association poses these questions:
 - *Do you or someone close to you spend some amount of time every week thinking about the problem?*
 - *Is the problem embarrassing, to the point that you want to hide from others?*
 - *Over the past few months, has the problem reduced your quality of life?*
 - *Does the problem take up considerable time (e.g., more than an hour per day)?*
 - *Have you curtailed your work or educational ambitions because of the problem?*
 - *Are you rearranging your lifestyle to accommodate the problem?*
- **When it comes to finding a therapist, you have several options.** You can find one locally. There are also numerous online therapy options available. Most of these online options offer both video sessions and text chat options. They will also try to work with your insurance provider.

Have Self-Compassion

- **It's essential to remember that you're not defective if you regularly experience fear and anxiety.** There are many factors that contribute to fear, and you're not choosing to be afraid.
- **In light of this, be compassionate toward yourself.** Avoid trying to deny the existence of your fears or act like you have it all together. Accept and love yourself, fears and all. If you're unwilling to accept yourself until you completely overcome your fears, you'll be perpetually unhappy.