

Crossing the Line of Fear

By John Assaraf

I remember when I was younger and in school, fear stopped me from asking out a girl I wanted to date. I can remember all the thoughts of different things I wanted to say and how I would ask her out. As quickly as the idea to ask her out popped in my head, I came up with all the reasons why she might say no. I remember the “feeling” of rejection and embarrassment even though I didn’t even pick up the phone! It’s as real in my mind right now as it was then. I didn’t understand it then but I certainly do today.

Have you ever had thoughts of fear that have caused you not to move ahead with any of your dreams or goals? Every human on earth at one time or another feels this “fear” and reverts back into their “safety” or comfort zone. The system was created to protect us in times of real danger, but we must learn when danger is real or caused by our imagination of what may happen...again.

What ability causes one person to face and overcome possible rejection at work, in school or in a relationship easier to handle, than someone who is paralyzed by the mere thought?

A man who goes after business like a tiger may be uncomfortable with women and therefore not be able to approach a woman for fear of rejection. A woman who is miserable in a relationship may be petrified at the thought of saying anything to her spouse in fear of the potential discussion or backlash. A child may not seek out other children to play with at school in fear of rejection. The list can go on and on from fear of leaving your job to fear of hurting yourself if you try something new.

So what is really going on and how can we stop this once and for all?

First and foremost understand that fear is a very common feeling and we all have one fear or another. The “feeling” of fear is almost solely based on what we think may happen if we try and fail. It is different than actually knowing that we will hurt ourselves if we fall 20 stories from a building.

Most fears are illusions we create in our own head based on past conditioning and not based on what is possible. As children, we are natural-born risk takers and for the most part we are fearless. The meaning we give an experience when we do not achieve the result we want determines how we “see” and “feel” the next opportunity that seems like the one we’ve experienced in the past.

If we experience rejection more times than we care to, we tend to mentally label the experience a negative one. Over time this becomes our belief and our beliefs, as you already know, become your reality.

What would happen if we changed the meaning of an experience we didn’t like? What if we learned to label our experiences as “learning” or “interesting” experiences? Do you think your tolerance level would increase for trying again?

I have learned that people who really succeed in various areas of life often frame their experiences differently than those who quickly label the experience as a negative one.

When we feel fear, we are playing a mental trick that is not conducive to growth. All growth comes from stretching oneself past the comfort zone that limits us. Risk is a necessary part of the reward. You cannot have one without the other.

Let me suggest that you start to label your experiences in ways that serve you rather than limit you. We have very few limits except the ones that we set on our selves. And those are mostly out of fear from the past. Do not let your past control your present thinking. Step out and grow. Step out of your comfort zone and be free again!

John Assaraf