

**Live Life Boldly!
How to Quiet Your Fears and Step Out With Courage**

British adventurist Sir Ranulph Fiennes has been called *the* *world’s greatest living explorer*. He’s navigated some of the worlds most challenging and inhospitable places on earth including trekking the Antarctic and both North and South Poles, unsupported and on foot.

When he was in his 60’s, Fiennes decided to overcome a severe fear of heights by climbing Mt. Everest. On his second attempt, hundreds of feet short of the summit, he suffered severe chest pains, at night, dangling from a rope on a near vertical ice wall at 29,000 feet. Frozen and in pain, he turned around and somehow managed to descend. He lived to tell the tale, running a marathon a mere 16 weeks after his near fatal heart attack.

When it comes to facing your fears how daring are you? Do you turn tail and head in the opposite direction? Do you waver and hope the feeling passes? Or, do you, like Fiennes, stand firm and always face your fears head on?

Picture what your life would look like if you consistently faced off against your fears, both big and small, with the fearlessness of someone like Sir Ranulph Fiennes. What would it feel like to boldly stare down and confront your fears, never letting them interfere with what you want to accomplish? Imagine what you could achieve if you never again let fear get in your way.

The truth is, the closest most of us will get to scaling Mt. Everest is flying past it en route to a comfortable vacation destination. But there is good news; you don’t have to be an adrenaline junkie, risking life and limb, to be fearless. Life offers plenty of everyday opportunities for us to face our fears. Whether it’s asking your crush out on a date, speaking in public, or asking for a raise, no fear is too big or too small to challenge – and we all have within us the potential to be fearless.

The first step to becoming more fearless begins with understanding fear – what it is, what scares us (and why), and how fear holds us back from living a full and fulfilling life. Once we gain some insight into our fears, fearlessness can become second nature.

If you want to be more fearless, more often, let’s start by exploring what scares you.

*“Don’t be afraid of your fears. They’re not there to scare you. They’re there to let you know that something is worth it.” C. JoyBell C.*

We all know what fear feels like – dread, tension, difficulty breathing, rapid heartbeat, sweating, racing thoughts, and ‘butterflies’ are just a few of the feelings we associate with fear.

It’s no wonder so many of us choose, one way or another, to sidestep our fears. After all, who wants to feel *those* uncomfortable feelings?

But what if your fears aren’t designed to scare you? What if, instead, your fears were a doorway into new and exciting prospects? What if fear is an opportunity for personal growth in disguise?

**What is Fear?**

The word ‘fear’ derives from the Old English word *faer,* meaning sudden attack, peril, or danger. Simply put, fear is an emotional response to a perceived threat. It’s primitive. It’s powerful. It’s universal. Fear is like an internal alarm; it’s designed to warn us and protect us from danger.

There are two types of fear responses: biochemical and emotional.

Biochemical Fear is a natural emotion resulting from a perceived threat, it is designed to make us more alert and responsive as a way to survive. When this happens, our bodies respond in specific ways such as sweating, increased heart rate, increased awareness, and high adrenaline levels. This state of fear is often referred to as a “fight or flight” response.

Emotional Fear differs from person to person. Because fear involves some of the same chemical responses in our brains that are similar to happiness and excitement, feeling fear under certain circumstances can be seen as fun. For example, the fears you experience with watching a scary movie, riding on a roller coaster, or venturing into extreme sports, create emotional fear.

Some people like emotional fear, however, there are others who have negative reactions to emotional fear, and consequently, try to avoid fear-inducing situations wherever possible. Although the physical reaction is the same, this type of fear may be perceived as either positive or negative, depending on the person.

**What are We Afraid of?**

While most of us aren’t facing the same threats our ancestors did, we still face threats in our day-to-day lives that cause us stress. What are we so afraid of? Quite a lot, as it turns out.

Public speaking, flying, and death are often touted as the things we fear the most and, while those fears are real, our dread go much deeper and wider than a potential bruised ego, gravity, and our inevitable demise.

According to *The Chapman University Survey on American Fears*, our biggest fears of 2018 include: government corruption, the state of the environment, danger befalling loved ones, and personal finances. Fears that didn’t crack the top 10? Public speaking (#59), death (#54), and flying (#82). Regardless of ranking, the survey suggests there is no shortage of fears to keep us up at night.

The survey also suggests more people than ever are afraid, and fear, in general, is on the rise. All this dread is having a significant negative impact on our lives.

For example, fear can make us; hesitate, procrastinate, experience creative blocks, and be averse to risk, all of which can lead to low accomplishment. That can cause stress. That stress can lead to cognitive impairment, an increased risk of heart disease, premature aging, relationship conflicts, depression, and more – and a cycle of fear is born. That cycle can leave us feeling like we’re just going through the motions of life without really living.

*“My life has been filled with terrible misfortune most of which never happened.”*

*Michel de Montaigne*

**Putting Your Fears into Perspective**

But facing our fears doesn’t have to be scary. Luckily, you have within you the power to overcome your fears and embrace the happiness you deserve, right here, right now.

*But how* you may ask?

Let’s take a look.

The remedy for our childhood fear of monsters lurking under the bed was to shine a light into the darkness. Once we did, it revealed the truth – there were no monsters. Once we shine the light of truth at what scares us, we often discover our fears to be unfounded.

So let’s shine a light of truth on some beliefs that may be holding you hostage to your fears.

It’s human nature to worry. But did you know that research has determined that 85% of what you worry about never actually happens? Let that sink in for a moment – most of your fears never come true.

*But wait!* *That still leaves 15% of the time when things don’t work out!* You’re right, AND that same research reveals that, when misfortune did occur, people found they usually handled the situation better than expected. Not only that, they learned something valuable from their ‘misfortune’, often times even feeling as though the fear was worse than the actual situation.

Let’s take a moment to recap: we all experience fear, most of your fears will never materialize and, if they do, chances are it won’t be as bad as you imagine, and you will handle it better while learning something useful along the way. Sounds like a win-win-win proposition, doesn’t it?

**How to Overcome Your Fears**

*But what can I do to be more fearless,* you may ask? Good question.

Being fearless isn’t about the absence of fear. Being fearless is facing the things in life that scare you, in spite of the sweaty palms and racing heartbeat. Being fearless is realizing that what you want is more important than any fear you have of achieving it. Remember Sir Ranulph Fiennes? He climbed Everest *because* of his fear of heights.

But being fearless doesn’t need to involve life or death situations. Fearless is falling in love again after being brokenhearted. Fearless is leaving a successful career for an uncertain opportunity. Fearless is standing by someone who’s disappointed you in the past. Fearless is falling down and getting back up again (and again).

*“I’ve been absolutely terrified every minute of my life—and I’ve never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do.” Georgia O’Keeffe*

Ready to get started on the path to a more fearless you? Then check out these tips to give you the upper hand in facing off against your fears:

**1. Own your fear.** Psychologist Carl Jung said, *“What you resist not only persists, but will grow in size.”* So it goes with fear, as well; resisting fear expands it. Fearlessness comes from embracing your vulnerability, not by avoiding it.

Isn’t it time you stopped running and faced your imaginary monsters?

**2. Reshape your fear.** You’re smart, and that can be a problem. Are you a habitual ‘catastrophizer’, always assuming the worst will happen? Having an active imagination can fuel our concerns, instead of suppressing them. Our brains often overestimate our fears while underestimating our ability to manage them. The next time you’re feeling afraid, instead of imagining the worst outcome, ask yourself *what’s the BEST thing that can happen,* and use your imagination to explore that scenario.

**3. Take a risk.** Playing it safe often feels like a low risk proposition, but what if the opposite is true? What if your playing it safe is actually a high-risk approach? When asked what they regret most, people on their deathbeds usually lament the risks they never took, not the ones they tackled.

**4. Build your courage muscle.** If you’ve ever started a new exercise habit you know that building muscle requires starting slow and working your way up. Developing courage is like building a muscle. Show up, start slow, practice your form, and do the repetitions. Your fearless ‘muscles’ may be sore at first, but once fearlessness becomes a habit for ‘the small stuff’ you encounter, taking more courageous steps for the bigger challenges gets easier too.

You don’t need to climb Mt. Everest to conquer your fear of heights. But facing your fears head on is the sure way of overcoming what’s holding you back.

*“My five decades of breaking records through taking risks have convinced me that successful control of your own mind gives you the best chance of winning the battle.”*

*Sir Ranulph Fiennes*

When it comes right down to it, we really don’t have much control over the good and bad things that happen to us. Two critical things we do have control over is our mindset and our responses to our circumstances.

Think of a fear you’re facing (or avoiding) right now. Ask yourself, what would your life look like if you decided to face that fear, head on? What would it feel like if you showed courage – even a little bit? The courage to take a risk. The courage to be your true self. The courage to love others. The courage to love yourself.

When you decide to take the initiative to confront your fears you’ll discover that the universe is in your corner. Will it be easy? No. Will you face obstacles? Yes. Will you make mistakes? Yes.

But remember, your dreams aren’t meant to collect dust on a shelf or, more heartbreakingly, to be taken with you to your grave.

What it takes to break through your fears and become fearless - you’ve got that within you. You’ve got courage in you. You’ve got creativity in you. You’ve got goodness in you. So what are you afraid of?