

# Overcoming Fear

Genuine fear warns and reminds us to stay alert and pay attention. But if a fear is irrational it threatens and jeopardizes so that we cannot do the things we want to do. It can become generalized so that we have an overriding feeling of fear with no real focus. For this reason it is important to focus on and identify a fear clearly, so it can be seen in its true light and confronted realistically.

When looking at a somewhat frightening situation it is all too easy to exaggerate it, to over-generalize and assume the worst, or to be more negative than we need to be about our own capabilities and about the scale of the threat.

## **The choice we have**

Each time we experience fear, we have a choice to either allow it to engulf us, or to release it and trust that things will work out for us. When we operate under the constraint of fear, we are guaranteed to create what we fear. A fear that is not faced grows as it cycles through us. Each time it resurfaces, we have a harsher experience, until it becomes a phobia and ruins our lives. The alternative is to confront the fear, to look at the circumstances objectively and rationally, and then its inherent lesson can be learned.

Accompanying every fear is a need that we feel is threatened. Therefore the different kinds of fear correspond to the fundamental needs that we all have:

**Fear of separation and loneliness.** This is the most basic fear and it includes fear of death. To be accepted by others is a fundamental human need, so loneliness and the fear of loneliness can be found at the root of many behavioral problems: "If I say that or do this, people might not like me and I'll be on my own." "I had friends in the past but nobody likes me anymore."

Recovering self-confidence and the sense of opportunity in the present is the way to move through loneliness: to recognize that the 'all-alone feeling' we label 'loneliness' is an opportunity to pause and take a breath between different experiences, relationships and activities.

**Fear of the unknown.** This fear accompanies change, growth and any new endeavor, such as going to a new school or making a new friend.

**Fear of pain.** Physical, mental, emotional or spiritual pain is experienced (or even just imagined) and then feared. Fear of experiencing the pain again keeps adults and children unnecessarily locked within self-imposed limits to their life experience.

**Fear of humiliation or being 'made wrong'.** Teenagers in particular so fear the loss of their 'image' that they can succumb to peer pressure and act quite against their better judgment.

**Fear of rejection.** With this fear one avoids taking interpersonal risks, such as stating strong opinions that diverge from the group or family, or making decisions on one's own.

**Fear of loss of control.** This fear may come up if one has been betrayed in the past, or if one has been persuaded or influenced to do inappropriate actions, or if one has been frustrated at being unable to complete a cycle of action, or if one has tried to communicate with an angry person who won't listen, and so on.

And there are many more common fears. For all of them, the resolution is to perceive and accept the true reality of the situation and to trust that one's needs will be met. The magic of the universe is that then, yes they will be.