

FEAR

The **Worst** Four Letter Word



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Part One -- Understanding Fear and How it Works.....	4
Part Two -- Types of Fear.....	7
Part Three -- Identifying Your Fears.....	9
Part Four -- Facing Fear and Moving On.....	11
Part Five -- Lessons from “Fearless” Leaders.....	15

Introduction

You're walking along a dark, winding street on your way home from the bus stop. Suddenly, you sense rather than hear the presence of someone close behind you – matching your every step. Tiny hairs on your neck rise in a frosty chill that permeates your body. Fear has you in its grip.

Quickly, you think about your options. ***Fight – or flight?*** You can stay and face the danger or run as fast as you can to safety. It's a human feeling as old as time and is usually accompanied by a racing heart, rapid breathing and muscles tensing.

If we didn't have that innate ability to sense and react immediately to fear, the human race likely wouldn't have survived. Fear begins with a stimulus that's transmitted to the brain. How we respond to the fear triggers can be automatic or a series of communications that lead to action or thought.

Unfortunately, fear is a product of our unconscious brain and the result of millennia of scary past stimuli that we can't undo. But, we can learn to control our fears. This book explores fear and how it can render us helpless or provide us with the positive stimulus we need to move on.

Understanding fear and how it works is the first step in overcoming our fears. Then, we can train our brains on how to react to certain things or situations. You'll also learn why fear is important to us. If we weren't afraid of anything, we might walk into oncoming traffic or swim with sharks.

Fear can keep us safe. But, it can also keep us from being and doing all we can be and enjoying life to the fullest. Certain fears can turn into phobias that may ruin our health and mental well being.

It's important to identify our fears, analyze them and then decide whether they're real -- or not. Most fears that keep us from realizing success are

unfounded. After we know that for sure, we can learn how to deal with them and move on.

Certain people – some heroes and some men and women from humble or dire beginnings – have overcome tremendous fears to accomplish great and important things. This book will highlight some of them and you'll learn how they worked through their worst fears and ultimately realized great triumphs.

Franklin Roosevelt, who overcame many physical obstacles to become the 32nd President of the United States of America and led us through the darkest days of World War II, inspired a nation in his first inaugural address by facing the fear of war by saying, *"The only thing we have to fear – is fear, itself."*

Don't be afraid of fear. Know it for what it is and move on to bigger and better things.

Part One

Understanding Fear and How It Works

The chemical components of fear amount to a chain reaction in the brain that begins with a traumatic stimulus that causes the discharge of powerful chemicals. These chemicals then cause your heart to race, the hairs on the back of your neck to rise, rapid breathing and a tensing of the muscles.

In that moment, you're either consciously or unconsciously deciding, "*fight or flight*." Do you stay and face the danger or run? What you decide depends on how dangerous the threat is and how you've been trained to deal with it.

A mouse running across the kitchen floor may cause you to automatically leap up onto a chair whereas the fear of speaking to a large audience of people may cause you to think through the fear and perform.

Fear usually causes the automatic response. Billions of brain cells take over to process the information available through your sensory perception and trigger a response. Now, research scientists know that certain parts of the brain are the culprits to triggering responses to fear.

These special, sensory areas of the brain are:

- **Thalamus** – Determines where sensory data that's gathered from parts of the body (such as the eyes, ears, skin and mouth) is sent. The thalamus is in charge of audio and visual signals, motor control and sleep and wakened states and sends those stimuli to the cerebral cortex.
- **Hippocampus** – This area of the brain is part of the limbic system that mainly controls your memories and emotional make up that could cause disorientation. It consists of mirror image halves on the right and left areas of the brain. Studies indicate that the hippocampus is

one of the first areas of the brain to appear damaged in Alzheimer's disease.

- **Hypothalamus** – An extremely important part of the brain that initiates automatic responses such as “fight or flight.” It's small – about the size of an almond – and controls the nervous system. It also controls hunger, thirst, sleep and body temperature.
- **Sensory Cortex** – Serves as an interpreter for the sensory data that the brain collects from all parts of the body. No area of the body is immune to the receptors of the sensory cortex. This intricate system picks up reception from the skin, skeletal muscles, bones, joints, organs and cardiovascular system.

As you can see, you can't avoid the brain's sensory receptors which collect the data that can create fear unless one or more parts of the body are damaged. Even then, other receptors in other parts of the body become more acute to make up for the damaged area.

For example, a person who is blind may develop excellent audio receptors that surpass what sighted humans can hear. All of these physical reactions to outside stimulus alerts the brain to danger and creates a “fight or flight” fear response.

Perceived vs. Actual Fear

The process of creating fear isn't a conscious reaction that we can always control. Rather, it's a combination of genetic and environmental stimuli that has been ingrained in our brains and our physical make up and our subconscious ends up creating the fear.

There are a couple of different ways that people react when fear happens. One is to react immediately and risk over-reacting to a situation that isn't really fearful. For example, if you have an innate fear of spiders and

perceive you feel one crawling across your leg, you might react by jumping and swatting your leg.

The sensory receptors in your brain have given you the signal that something abnormal is on your leg and since you fear spiders, you automatically perceive that tickling sensation as a spider.

The other way of reacting to a 'crawling' sensation across your leg is to take a second or two to think about what it could be. You're likely to get a more accurate interpretation of what's really happening than if you took the first response to jump and swat at your leg.

Looking down at your leg will either confirm the suspicion of a spider or you'll discover that a cat just crossed your path and tickled your leg or a number of other scenarios that are likely just as benign.

The first response of perceived fear is the "flight" reaction that occurs automatically and without conscious thought. The second response of thinking through the situation will determine if it's something you should be afraid of – or not.

No matter which response you initiate, the same information is being relayed to the thalamus – that part of the brain that sends the data to the sensory cortex, which then interprets the meaning of the stimulus.

All of the data that's been collected in your brain cells since you were born and even through some of your ancestors is then analyzed and a decision is made on how to react. You'll either get the message that danger is imminent or that there's no danger at all.

How the Body Responds to Fear

When you get the signal from your body's sensory system, your body uses your nervous system to initiate reactions in your body. The adrenal glands react to provide energy through the bloodstream and these two reactions provide what your system needs for the "fight or flight" response.

The sudden flow of hormonal energy causes your body to respond in several different ways depending on how fearful you perceive the threat to be. Here are some of the effects of fear when your body begins to respond:

1. Blood pressure rises and the heart begins to race.
2. Eyes react by dilating to receive more light.
3. Veins contract, increasing blood flow to muscles (this is what causes the chill factor in your skin).
4. Muscles tense from the increase in adrenaline and glucose.
5. Some muscles relax so that more oxygen gets to the lungs.
6. The temporarily dispensable parts of your body such as the immune and digestive systems cease to function, sending all the energy to other areas of the body.
7. Focus switches from small issues to the overall situation of the immediate real or perceived danger.

These necessary and subconscious reactions to fear are necessary to achieve a fight or flight reaction that ensures your survival. Every animal on earth has this instinct. Survival would be impossible without these bodily responses to the brain's signals.

Part Two

Types of Fear

Some types of fear are good to have. For example, the extreme fight or flight fear that you respond to when you're faced with real danger can mean the difference in survival or certain death or injury.

Today, the types of fear are different than they were millenniums ago – or even decades ago. Fear changes as you grow older while youth seems to have little or no fear of death. The young sometimes live on the edge, performing feats that could kill or badly maim if something goes wrong.

As you age, you become more aware of your mortality and frailties. You may become more cautious about the challenges you set yourself up for, knowing that you're slower than when you were young and your mind doesn't work quite as fast.

Here are some types of fear that may plague you throughout your life and could even harm your health and mental well being unless you work through your feelings and emotions:

- **Failure** – Ask yourself, “What would I do with my life if I knew I could not fail?” Fear of failure takes away the ambition and determination that could help you succeed in business and personal endeavors unless you learn to overcome it.
- **Being Alone** – Pascal remarked, “All men's miseries derive from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone.” Being alone with ourselves is the best way to understand who you really are and what makes us tick. But, for some people, being alone is terrifying. Unless you can overcome that fear, you'll never truly know yourself.
- **Death** – Fear of ceasing to exist is a primary fear of all human beings. It can cause other fears such as fear of heights and fear of snakes. If you're so afraid of death that you stay indoors all the time rather than

venturing out into sunlight and socialization you may miss out on all the world has to offer.

- **Future** – If you have an overwhelming fear of what the future holds, you may not be able to enjoy the present moment as much as you should. That fear could keep you from many successes that you could have had by living in the moment.

Today, there are many other types of fear that bombard our minds, such as fear of terrorism, nuclear war and crime and violence. Fear that causes you to plan ahead, stay healthy and watch your finances can be good to have in moderation, but when they turn into phobias, fear becomes detrimental to your health and mindset.

When Fears Become Phobias

Chronic fear in the form of phobias can be emotionally and physically draining. Your blood pressure and lowered immune system may cause illnesses – plus, being fearful all of the time can interfere with having a satisfying lifestyle.

If you have a fairly unimportant fear such as jumping out of an airplane, it probably doesn't interfere too much with your daily life. You'll only have to confront the fear if you're flying and have to jump from the plane.

Other fears aren't so inane. Phobias develop when you become afraid of the fear, itself. Phobias vary in intensity from person to person. Some obsess about their fears while others may have problems with it at certain points of their lives or only when certain triggers cause the phobia to become severe.

Phobias come in all shapes and sizes. Among the most odd phobias include:

- Sciophobia – Fear of Frogs
- Coulrophobia – Fear of Clowns
- Verbophobia – Fear of Words
- Euphobia – Fear of hearing good news
- Panophobia – Fear of ***everything***

With a phobia, you may change your life to avoid the triggers. You may develop depression, sleeping problems, anxiety issues and other health-threatening symptoms. If you think you may have a phobia, it's important that you make a connection with a counselor or health professional who is experienced in dealing with phobias.

The professional should be able to make a correct diagnosis and be able to start you on a treatment plan to alleviate the symptoms of the phobia right away. Treatments for phobias may range from cognitive and behavioral methods to high-tech methods such as virtual reality.

Part Three

Identifying Your Fears

When fear begins to interfere with your life and you suspect it's holding you back from accomplishing all you could be, it's time to identify the fears and work toward eliminating them from your life or diminishing them so much you don't know they're there most of the time.

Even though your fears seem to be different, there are common threads that usually link them. For example, making a public speech may stem from your fear of rejection – or of not being able to deal with what you're dealt in life.

The underlying fear behind the emotions you're dealing with is fundamental to all of us. When you worry about our fears unnecessarily or obsess about them, it's time to identify them for what they really are and from where they originated.

After you identify and isolate your fears, study them carefully to discover if they're unfounded – or not. Defeating your fears can help to build your self-esteem and set you on a life path of overcoming all obstacles that stand in your way.

Unfounded or Real? Know Your Fears for What They Really Are

If you're like most of the population, you probably have many fears. If you try dealing with them one at a time, it will be exhausting, so knowing which fears are real and which are imagined is helpful.

Dealing with fear on a constant basis is grueling and tiring. It rules your life and your every thought. A real fear might be one where you're afraid when

you see a big dog or dogs. Somewhere along the line you had an experience (or an innate fear) with dogs.

An unfounded fear might be one where you are afraid of rejection. This fear may carry over to other fears such as growing older, more wrinkles, social insecurities and fear of losing your looks.

When you identify your fears, notice in particular if most are unfounded. You may have had one or two experiences where you were rejected and that hurt you very much. But, you've likely had some good experiences too and a group of friends who can validate that you're a pleasure to be around.

Fear is often said to be ***False Evidence Appearing Real***. These types of fears can become overwhelming because you don't understand why they appear to be so real to you. You can become frustrated with your lack of understanding and keep repeating the fear cycle.

The outcome of an uncertain situation may be feared because we can't predict or control it. Some people don't want to handle a snake because they're afraid they'll get bitten, while others have the confidence to keep them for pets.

If you fail to identify your fears, they may become self-sabotaging and you may not realize what effect they're having on your life. Never make the mistake of thinking that unfounded fears won't turn into long-term problems.

Learn all you can about your particular fears and decide whether they're founded or not. Knowledge about your past fears that may have originated in childhood and carried on into adulthood can help you determine what action to take to rid them from your life.

How to Gain Knowledge about Your Fears

It's probably becoming clearer now that the lack of knowledge or understanding about a situation, person or feeling can lead to fear. There are some valuable tools available that can help you in the final phase of conquering those fears and getting on with your life.

Now that we have the Internet, there are so many ways to seek knowledge. Blogs exist about certain fears that may give you fabulous insight into how others are dealing with the exact same fear you have.

Books, movies and websites also address various fears and can often make a solution click in your mind that you never before thought of. One especially helpful biographical movie that can help if you're afraid of public speaking is "The King's Speech," a moving story about how King George, V of England overcame his stuttering speech impediment and gave one of the greatest speeches in history.

You may need to develop behavior patterns and different ways of thinking that can help you overcome the fears that are playing significant roles in your life. Biographies of those who have overcome fear can give you the courage you need to work through your own fears.

Strategies, examples and insights into every type of fear you can imagine can become extremely effective in providing you with the tools you need to conquer fear and keep moving forward with your life.

Part Four of this ebook will discuss how to develop strategies for dealing with fear, learning from past fears that have held you back and how to move on to bigger and better things in your life.

Part Four

Facing Fear and Moving On

After you've identified and faced your most destructive fears, it's time to develop strategies for moving on in your life. It may be interesting to note that your subconscious brain doesn't recognize the difference between reality and your imagination.

That fact can be scary if left alone to tell you all sorts of things that aren't true, but it can work to your advantage if you know how to imagine your way out of certain fears. In other words, you're tricking your subconscious brain to create an experience that will over-ride your fear.

When you repeat the process of imagining a good outcome of a situation that involves a fear, you build on what's real and what you have knowledge of to create that reality in your subconscious. Be sure to make the imaginary experience as real as you can by feeling emotion and by using other sensory receptors that make it even more real.

How Fear Can Help You Grow

Fear doesn't have to be all bad. It can be a touchstone to make real and positive changes in your life. What has caused debilitating loss of energy and a roller coaster of emotions can actually become perfect opportunities for growth and progress.

When you face your worst fears, you realize how they're holding you back. Opportunities simply pass you by when you're so afraid of doing something that you do nothing. It may be opportunities with people, situations or personal growth that can be yours when you learn to work through the resistance that fears cause.

Extreme fears can also cause insecurities that will haunt you day and night until you learn to cope with them. It can cause loss of self-esteem which can lead to depression, isolation and other problems that can sabotage your life.

As soon as you feel more secure about your emotional well-being you feel more like facing life's challenges and experience personal growth. You'll feel more like meeting people and socializing, which can open many doors in your life. Here are some other ways that fear can help you grow:

- **Destructive behaviors** are also a result of your fears. If you've experienced procrastination, neglect even the most basic of responsibilities and doubt yourself at every turn, you probably have a fear linked to success.

Many people fear success. That would mean change and fear of change and being unworthy or unprepared can turn you into a tailspin of fear unless you prepare by working through those fears and turn them around.

- **Intellectual, emotional and decision-making abilities** are sometimes impaired by fear because it won't let you move outside of your comfort zone and experience new ways of doing and thinking. You'll never live life fully if you can't open yourself up to challenges that can help you grow.

Since fear is usually irrational, you won't make good decisions if you let the fear tie you down and narrow your perspective of a situation. It's like trying to keep on the road in a blinding snowstorm. When you remove the fear you remove the reason that kept you from going 5 mph in the snowstorm. The road ahead will be clearly mapped and you can move on full speed ahead.

- **Motivation** is what keeps us going, searching, learning and taking chances. When you identify and face the fears that keep you from being motivated, you'll remove the obstacle that keeps you from full enjoyment of life.

Fear may also help you grow if you can work through the fears that keep you from being motivated. You can condition yourself to turn hopes from futile to hopes for the future. Motivation can be the catalyst that spurs you on.

Fear may have been keeping you from taking responsibility for yourself and your actions (or lack of action). Defeating the fears that are causing you to miss life's opportunities for happiness and success will make you even more secure in your conquering abilities.

Defeating Your Worst Fears

You don't have to be afraid of fear anymore. No matter what your fears, there are plans in place to cope with them. Strategies that help to deal with fear can Here are a few:

1. **Build your self-esteem** – When you think highly enough of yourself, there's hardly anything that will get you down permanently. Whatever fear you're harboring will become dimmer in nature when you know you have the ability to cope with any problem you're handed.
2. **Interrogate yourself** – After you've identified and isolated your worst fears, ask yourself a series of questions about them that are designed to help you understand them more. Questions such as, "What's the worst that can happen?" and "What can I do to minimize the fear?" are good questions to paring down the fear to a manageable size.
3. **Do what you're afraid of** – A lot has been written about overcoming fear by just doing it. If you're afraid of heights, climb a mountain – if you're afraid of sharks, swim with them. That's also true about what we

fear in our everyday lives. If you're afraid of public speaking, join a "toastmaster's" club. Doing what you're most afraid of will make you feel more capable and less frightened.

4. **Use visualization** – Sports enthusiasts, especially Olympic contenders, often use visualization techniques to help them exceed their limitations. Visualization can help you overcome fear by imagining how you cope with the fear before it becomes a reality.
5. **Take small steps** – Fear can feel like an ominous cloud hovering over your life. You can't wipe out years of fear – and possible genetic reasons why you fear – in a day. It will take time and strategy to convince your subconscious that you're not afraid of whatever it is holding you back from experiencing life to the fullest.
6. **Relax** – Worrying and fretting about your fears will only exacerbate the emotions involved. Learn how to relax, whether by reading books, taking a class or speaking with a counselor. When you learn about how to relax your mind, you'll also be learning about how to turn your thoughts into less fearful ones.
7. **Take control of your life** – Fearful people are usually pessimistic and that powerful force of fear can be like a huge boulder on your back. You're less likely to break out of a job you hate, less likely to find love and a myriad of other obstacles that keep you from being truly happy. When you confront your fears and take back control, you'll likely be surprised that the worst you thought could happen – doesn't.

If fear in any form is holding you back from developing key skills that could help you reach an ultimate goal in life, you owe it to yourself to explore that fear and take steps to deal with them successfully – once and for all.

Learning from Past Fears

Amazingly, many of us need fear to get ahead. A crucial deadline or upcoming test can really get you going and the adrenalin rush you get from

the moment is enough to spur you on. Others may become paralyzed by that same fear and unable to function as we should to get the job done.

No matter which example fits your personality, fear usually affects how we perform. If you get a job done at the last minute, it probably won't be the quality it would if you'd spent more time on it.

Not doing the job at all because you were paralyzed by fear can be even worse. It could cost your job or cause others to suffer. This type of fear usually comes from something that happened in your past that makes you repeat the pattern over and over.

If you think that fear is sabotaging your efforts to succeed, it's time to look at how past fears are still haunting you and holding you back. Here are some past fears that you'll want to consider working on if you're to enjoy future success:

- **Fear of Learning** – You may have learned to fear learning when you were in school and thought you had to master the subject to get good grades. Now that you're older, learning something new may cause fear that you'll never be able to learn enough to get it right.

You need to realize that sometimes a short lesson can help you grow and gain a good understanding of a subject. Try different approaches. If learning from reading a book isn't stimulating enough, try a video on the subject.

- **Fear of Change** – Trading that old pair of slippers for a new pair may change your comfort level for awhile. The newer slippers are a tighter fit and don't yet conform to the shape of your foot. When you rid yourself of an old fear, change is bound to happen.

Your routine may be interrupted and people may expect more of you when you demonstrate that the old fears are gone. Actually, getting

rid of the old fear provides more options from which you can choose. Look at change as a good and powerful opportunity.

- **Fear of Discovery** – When you trade in your worst fears for a new you, will people discover that you're not as smart as you've led them to believe? You may have had an instance in the past where you felt dumb because you asked a question and it was laughed at, so now you're afraid to be vulnerable.

Someone once said that, "There are never dumb questions – only dumb answers." No question or search for knowledge should be scoffed at. Building your self-esteem will take care of that fear.

Naming your worst fears and relating it to the past can help you see how your situation is different now than what it was. When fear keeps you from learning by making you procrastinate or become paralyzed by the thought, you will have to confront that fear before you can move on.

Confronting and dealing with your past fears can be even more daunting than the new fears you face today. Bringing those fears into reality and acknowledging them can help tremendously.

It's like walking down a street in daylight as compared to walking down the same street at midnight. Menacing shadows and sounds can create fear in your mind during the dark hours, whereas shedding light on the same street can help you see it for what it is – nothing.

Exploring the origins of your fears may help you to overcome the ones you now face. For example, if you had parents who were negative in their language patterns, you may have grown up thinking thoughts of "I can't..." and may still be afraid that you won't be able to do certain things.

Sometimes, parents scare children, thinking it's funny or perhaps thinking it will shield them from danger. If you had parents who made you fearful of certain things, you're likely still scared of them.

It will take work and time, but you can rid yourself of these annoying and sabotaging fears and become the person you were meant to be.

Part Five

Lessons from “Fearless” Leaders

One of the best ways to learn anything is from the experiences of others. There have been extraordinary leaders, entrepreneurs and celebrities who have overcome odds that you will likely never face to become over-the-top successes.

These are people, who for one reason or another, experienced adversities and trauma throughout their lives, but lived to overcome them and reach heights that made them famous.

Here are a few of those “fearless” leaders/celebrities who we can learn from:

- **George Washington** – The first president of the United States and a fearless leader during the Revolutionary War, Washington had a serious fear of being buried alive. Actually, his fear may not have been unfounded since medicine was so primitive then and people were in danger of being buried while still alive. But, he didn't let that fear bother him when he rode into bloody wars that could mean his death.
- **Richard Nixon** – 34th President of the United States, Nixon was deathly afraid of hospitals. When he suffered from a dangerous blood clot in 1974, he was able to overcome the fear and seek treatment in a hospital.
- **Napoleon Bonaparte** – Many powerful men are afraid of cats and Bonaparte was no exception. Among others of the infamous category are Hitler, Julius Caesar and Mussolini.
- **Oprah Winfrey** – TV personality, billionaire and benefactor, Winfrey overcame her fears of being rejected. She was born in poverty and was told over and over again that she could never become a television personality because of her looks and her race.

- **Warren Buffet** – A billionaire who overcame his insecurities to become one of the most sought after financial advisors ever. He was especially afraid of public speaking. Buffet realized early on that he would never achieve his dreams of success unless he could communicate, so he enrolled in a Dale Carnegie course that taught him how to get rid of the jitters.
- **Emily Dickinson** – Fear of failure had Dickinson paralyzed in her writing abilities. With encouragement and self-analyzing, Dickinson was able to overcome her fear and publish some of the most beautiful poetry ever written.
- **Marie Curie** – Becoming a successful woman was rare in the days that Marie Curie worked as a scientist. She managed to overcome her fear of presenting her ideas and disregarding the jeers and doubts of others to become a successful scientist.

Failure because of fears were not an option to those men and women who succeeded despite horrific odds and fears that made it difficult for them to proceed with their aspirations and dreams.

Don't Have Unrealistic Expectations

You can't expect to undo a lifetime of fear in one attempt. If you have a fear of taking tests, it's unlikely you'll do exceptionally well on the next one you take, even though you know the fear is unfounded and you are prepared.

It will take work on yourself and possibly many attempts before you become successful. The important fact is that you're working toward overcoming the fear and not letting it stop you in its tracks.

Many famous and highly successful people were passed over for jobs, failed in athletic pursuits and businesses before they hit the jackpot that

took them over the top. If they had let their fears and insecurities rule, they would never discover what it takes to win.

Don't expect perfection either. You can attempt to do something and have it fail without losing your drive to keep going. There is room for mistakes when you're learning something, so don't be afraid to fail at those first attempts.

Your fears may seem insurmountable right now, but making a life-changing decision to overcome that which you fear and sticking to it can turn your world around. Embrace those challenges and look forward to life on 'the other side' – **success**.