

# 3 ways fear drives success



By Vijay Eswaran

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, *“Do one thing every day that scares you.”*

We all have fear. None of us are so lucky to be entirely immune to it. Some choose to be consumed by their fears, while others choose to embrace them, befriend them, and harness them to fuel their dreams. The difference between the two is the former end up living an incomplete life of guilt and unhappiness, while the latter emerge stronger, smarter, and more likely to be on the path to success.



Fear can paralyze you or help you take that leap forward. After more than 25 years as an entrepreneur, I can tell you that there is only one fear worth having—that you have only today, and only today counts. And you have to maximize today.

A few years ago, I was on a family holiday at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. We took a boat into the reef on a beautiful Australian summer day. Not a single ship was in sight. The boat pulled up over a segment of the reef that was barely below the waterline. We jumped into the lovely, warm blue water with our snorkeling gear to enjoy the incredible spectacle that lay hidden underneath.

As I was snorkeling and floating along the warm current, suddenly something that looked like a line appeared

below me and the warm water turned chillingly cold. The line was the water ridge that plummeted from the safety of the reef into the darkness of the sea. The beautiful sight below me suddenly went pitch black. I realized that I had gone over the reef into the icy ocean and there was a real chance the strong current could carry me away or dump me into the path of a shark.

Fear overtook my entire being for a moment, and then survival instinct kicked in. I yanked my head out of the water and saw the reef was barely ten feet away. I started swimming back as fast as I could, probably the fastest I have ever in my life. Before I knew it, I was back in the beauty and comfort of the reef, but for about twenty numbing seconds, I had gone over to the dark side of Mother Nature and she was scary!

One moment I was in a comfortable, warm, and beautiful place without a care and the next moment, I was in a dark, cold abyss. That incident was a stark reminder of how close we all are to the line and how closely this line follows us for all of our lives.

Sometimes, we all need a little fear to remind us of what is truly important.

There are three things we must remember about fear.

## 1. Fear is Excitement in Disguise

*'Fear is just excitement in need of an attitude adjustment.'*—A Keeper's Truth

Let's take the example of skydiving. The idea of stepping off a plane at 14,000 feet altitude into nothingness evokes two completely different responses in two people.

Jill is thrilled and excited about flying through the sky like a bird, feeling the wind on her face. Jack is paralyzed by fear, imagining worst-case scenarios.

In Jill, the adventurous nature lying dormant in all of us awakens to the raw, unrestrained elixir of fear and it gives her an incredible high when she embraces it.

But for Jack, just the thought of doing something outside of his comfort zone strikes unimaginable terror in his heart.

So whether you experience fear or excitement really just depends on the lens you choose to look through at the world. It comes down to a choice.

Interestingly, young children are the least affected by fear of unknown. Most young kids are far more adventurous and fearless than many adults. As we get older, life has a way of creating layer upon layer of fear in our subconscious. Adulthood clouds our lens with self-doubt and other negative messages we see and hear every day.

So clean your lens and change your focus from fear to excitement. This takes practice, so start small and work up to the heavy lifting.

## 2. What Doesn't Paralyze You, Energizes You

This is my take on the old adage *What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.*

My experience tells me that fear is an unwelcome visitor in our life only when we are pursuing something we really want. That's usually a sign we are on the right track!

Think about all the times you were overcome by fear and there's a good chance you will notice a pattern. Most

likely it was just as you were about to embark on a major transition in your life, or were venturing into something completely new and unknown. This is completely normal. In fact, I would go so far as to say, if you are not afraid, you should perhaps revisit your decision.

In a sense, fear shows us the way. It reveals something we need to work on. What are you going to do with it? Do you allow it to paralyze you, or guide you? Allow your fear to be an energizing force that propels you forward. Let it uncover what you need to do—and then go do it.

### **3. Fear is a Great Motivator for Growth**

At an evolutionary level, it was a keen sense of fear during the time of the caveman that effectively helped keep humans out of danger. But now that life has evolved and we are no longer in survival mode, that sense of fear hasn't really gone away. It just manifested into something else. We are now afraid of change, uncertainty, and unfamiliar things.

Living in this type of fear leaves you stuck in one place forever, in an illusory comfort zone that is akin to a child's security blanket. We all have one and carry it around just as Linus does in the *Peanuts* cartoons. Security blankets are like substitute mothers. They give comfort and provide feelings of safety and security, much as our mothers would do for us. But, there comes a time when we must leave the childhood nest and with it, the security blanket.

Humans are wired for familiarity and it's just easy to stick to the familiar. But unless you learn to let go of that security blanket, you will never know what lies on the other side of fear. A life of predictability and familiarity is not a life of growth.

Leaning into fear is hard to do, because it makes us vulnerable. When you take that leap, sometimes you fly, but sometimes you crash and burn. In both cases, you are guaranteed to end up in a new place.

In summary, your life expands as your courage and willingness to grow expands. Lean into your fear today by taking small steps, and allow it to widen your world and guide you on your path to success.

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