

Looking Fear in the Face



By: Margaret R. Finley, LPC

Spring is just around the corner, and the season's message is rebirth. Spring also gives us the opportunity to adopt new ways of thinking. That's why the name of my practice is New Paradigm Counseling. The definition of paradigm is a pattern or way of looking at something. Adding the word "new" means we always have the opportunity to look at things in a new, healthier way if we have the "strength and courage to look fear in the face." That statement is part of a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt. The rest of the quote goes like this, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

"Fear" can be a huge problem to deal with, or it can be a life changing experience. Everyone has experienced fear in some form or another. For some of us, it's a subject we avoid at all cost. It's a big cost because that fear can keep us stuck and prevent us from reaching our full potential. To elaborate, all of our emotions fall into two categories, Love and Fear. Love is obvious, but Fear goes deeply into the core of our being. We may not even know the basis of our Fear. It's only through deep searching that we find what often rules over all of our emotions and actions, which lead to the consequences of our lives (consequences that are both good and bad). I can best express this through an example.

Imagine yourself on a bridge where the traffic is at a total standstill, which is expected to last for a while. You're on your way to an important appointment. You reach for your cell phone to call your appointment only to find your battery is dead, and you left the charger at home. How are you feeling right now? Angry, frustrated, scared, resentful, maybe even hopeless and helpless? What are some of the fears going through your head? What options do you have? Could you approach someone nearby and ask to use their cell phone? Or, does that bring out other fears in you such as being irresponsible, unprepared, unmotivated or of being rejected? My point is this: In order to move forward, we must discover our core fear and address it. But how do we do this? A story from my own life illustrates this point.

I have worked to overcome the fear of rejection. It's roots go

very deep and began in my childhood. Only recently have I discovered how much my fear of rejection can still crop up in the silliest way and have an effect on my relationships.

It all began one morning when I let our two dogs out. They have to be on long leads because we can't have a fence where we live. One of the dogs looks for any opportunity to run. So when I went to attach their collars to the leads, one lead's clasp was loose, so I put that one on the dog that doesn't run. I told my husband about the problem and said I would go that afternoon to buy a new lead. I spent a lot of time looking for a new lead, but had to settle for a different kind because the one I wanted was out of stock. I asked my husband to attach the new lead to the ground when he had time. The next morning, I went out to put the dogs on the lead and discovered that my husband hadn't used the new lead, but rigged together a makeshift attachment. I thought this was silly and told him so. When I asked why he didn't use what I purchased he replied, "Because I didn't like it." I left for my office, but as I was driving, I asked myself why I was so upset about this. That's when I realized this event had triggered my fear of being rejected.

Our fears can lead to many issues such as uncontrolled anger, depression, eating disorders, and problems with school, work and relationships. The first thing we must do is identify the source of our fears. Once this is done, we can face our fears, putting them into the proper perspective. Some people are able to do this on their own, and others need professional help. This spring, give yourself a chance for rebirth and embrace a new paradigm to live by.

Future articles will elaborate on how to recognize and confront fears, so you can deal with their adverse effects.

Margaret R. Finley of New Paradigm Counseling has over 30 years of experience working with children, adolescents and adults in a counseling setting. She specializes in individual, couples and family therapy. Please feel free to email or call me if you would like to see a particular topic covered.

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