



Your Emotional Turnaround (Part 2)

Dealing With Fear

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Hello, and welcome. This is Naomi from IttyBiz, and you're listening to the Emotional Turnaround track, part 2, called Dealing With Fear.

Fear is a funny thing. I can tell you this because I have a funny story about it to tell you in a moment. But it's also a funny thing because we tend to think that it's this big scary evil thing that the strong and successful people can magically crush away. But it's not. Fear is real, and it will be with you forever, but that's actually not a bad thing. Fear has a lot to teach you. Fear's looking out for you. And if you can accept that, you can actually work with fear to help you grow and move forward, instead of letting it lock you up. More on that in a moment.

Before we begin, I want you to think about what it means to be listening to this part of the class right now. It means that you're keeping a promise to yourself that you're going to turn your ittybiz around. It means that you're not giving up, and that you're willing to do what you need to do to get the things you want. Remember that, because some days you'll feel down on yourself for not doing enough or working harder. You're doing something now by listening to this. Give yourself credit for taking that step. You can do this.

So, let's get started.

Imagine You're a Fear

So, let's start with a little story. A little visualization exercise, if you will. Let's pretend you're a fear. You're a funny little fear, lonely, and sad and looking for someone to love. Wouldn't it be nice to find some other cute little fear, settle down, and make baby fears? You could call them fearlets. The pitter patter of little fearlet feet makes you feel all happy inside. You want to make baby fears.

And then those baby fears can grow up and have their own baby fears, until you have a whole society of fears running around, big and strong and loud, doing their fear thing all day long. You won't be a lonely little fear anymore.

Now, if you're this lonely little fear, you've got to live somewhere. So you go and set up shop in someone's head. You do your fear thing there, but you're getting hungry.

You haven't eaten in a while. If you don't find some reliable source of food, there's not much hope for you. There will be no wooing the fear of your dreams, and there will most certainly be no pitter patter of baby fear feet.

So what do you do? You get some food. And where do industrious, hard-working fears get their three square meals a day? Simple. **You.**

You are the food for fear. Because fears feed on inaction. They hang out in your head, and convince you that something bad will happen, and when you don't act on that fear, they get to eat you. Just a little bit. A nibble here, a bite there, and sometimes they binge when they're feeling quite bold. But the fear feeds on all the times you sit there and stress instead of doing something about it.

Afraid to send that email, so you don't? Chomp. Worried about next month's money, so you drown your sorrows in a glass of wine instead of working. Mmmm, tasty. Freaked out about rejection, angry customers, looking foolish or making a mistake, so you just tell yourself you'll get to working on stuff tomorrow? Sidle up to the buffet, because it's all-you-can-eat time for our little lonely fear, who's not so little anymore.

Inaction feeds fear. The more you sit around and don't do anything to get the scary thing over with, the stronger it gets. Eventually it's buff and gigantic, like a heavyweight boxing champion. It seems impossible to beat, so it just gets bigger and buffer every day you decide not to act.

So you have to fight back against it by taking action, because that's what takes away the fear's food supply. Not bravery, not pretending, you're not scared, but taking action. Every time you do something in spite of the fear, every time you face the scary and do it anyway, that fear loses about 5 pounds and becomes an inch shorter.

And the part of your brain that feels good about yourself gets those 5 pounds and gets an inch taller. And if you take enough action, even if you are scared out of your mind, the dynamic begins to change. The fear gets smaller and weaker. You get bigger and stronger. And then one day you're so much bigger than the fear, that you don't even notice it anymore.

Not because you're better than fear, or better as a person, or any of that. You don't notice it because you've simply had enough experiences where the thing you fear is never as bad as you think it will be.

It never is. But you don't know that until you take action. You don't know that until you starve the fear, and feed yourself.

Accepting Fear

So, let's talk about starving the fear for a moment. You'll notice I didn't say that you'll crush the fear or stomp the fear or kill the fear. That's because fears can't be killed. They're actually part of your brain on purpose. It's what made your ancestors say "Holy crap! Tiger!" and run like hell. That fear is what kept your line alive so that one day you could be born, grow up, and listen to me talk about fear. Fear is your "don't let me die" warning system, and that's why you can't – and shouldn't – kill it. Without fear, you would never know to run from tigers, and you would die.

The problem is, that fear that served us in the days when tigers might be around any corner doesn't know what to do when you live a life where very, very few things in your day to day existence could actually kill you. Your fear, trained very well to say "Oh, God! This could kill you! Run!" has very few opportunities where it has to prevent you from dying.

And that leads us to where we are today. When you're afraid of sending that email, or making that call, or trying something that could very possibly fail, your fear – like a parrot – has only one phrase in its vocabulary: "Oh God! This could kill you! Run!" Sometimes it comes out as "this could ruin everything and then I will die alone," or "I'd be so embarrassed I would want to die" or "the pain of this failure would kill me." Whatever it is, the fear has only one message: "This could be the end of the world."

And so we act like it's the end of the world. Because our brain is telling us it is. The fear has only one warning sound: disaster. It doesn't know the difference between being embarrassed and being in mortal danger. So you have to start training it by example. That's where the action part comes in.

Every time you take action, and you show that fear that you are not, in fact, in danger of disaster, it starts to learn. Slowly, very, very slowly, but it learns. It learns you can handle a little bit of embarrassment or failure from time to time, and it learns that more often than not you come out with some success at the end of your efforts. And it will start saving the freak-outs until there really is a tiger.

So remember, the job is to starve fear and train it, not kill it. If you try to kill fear, it will fight back as hard as it can, because it's part of your brain – it's part of you. If you try to kill it, it will do everything in its power to stop you. It will amplify the fear, so it seems impossible to kill. It will make you feel physically sick, so you'll stop wanting to fight it. It will throw its little fear hands in the air and say "Have mercy, please – I have fearlets!"

Fear does not want to die. And you don't have to try to kill it. Starve it and take its food back. Train it so its voice becomes quieter. Just keep taking action and it will get better, I promise.

Tiny Actions

So, let's talk for a moment about the actions you're going to take to starve your fears. If you have a giant fear that terrifies you, then you're not going to want to do something giant to starve it out. It seems too big and impossible and scary. You're going to want to start taking tiny actions instead to get your feet wet.

So, think of tiny fears you have and figure out what tiny action you can take to start starving the fear of all that tasty, tasty inaction. If you're scared of the 50 emails in your inbox, just tackle one today. Just one. Then take care of two tomorrow. And three the next day. And five a day from then on. Tiny, tiny steps.

These tiny steps will send tiny messages to your brain, saying, "See? That wasn't so bad." But more importantly, they will also send a message to your brain saying, "See? I can do things that are scary and I don't die." And this is a very, very important message. This is where your fear gets its new training. Your fear starts seeing that yes, you can handle the little things. It starts to trust you. Your brain stops working so hard to keep you from doing scary things.

And when you can do that, it gives you permission to start doing bigger things that seem scary to you. Now that you've handled email, maybe you can send out a little promotion. Maybe you can make a phone call or two that you've been putting off. Your brain can trust you with the little things, and then it gets to trust you with the big things, and it demonstrates that trust by saying "Ok, I guess I won't make you freak out so much when you think of doing this."

And little by little, life gets easier. Every time you do something scary you'll see that it's not as painful as you think. The waves of fear will come smaller and farther apart. It will get better over time, if you just accept it.

Sitting around telling yourself you shouldn't be afraid doesn't help. Telling yourself that a stronger person wouldn't be afraid doesn't help. You're scared. That's fine. That's human and healthy. Just start taking tiny actions and remember that you're not trying to be brave, you're just trying to starve the fear by taking little bits of You back.

Po Bronson once said that the absence of fear is not courage. The absence of fear is mental illness. He's right.

John Wayne once said that courage is being afraid and saddling up anyway. He's right, too.

It's okay to be afraid. But it's not okay to let your fear eat you.

Accept your fear, and take some action when you feel it welling up inside. Acting when scared is one of the messiest things you will ever do. You are under no obligation to act gracefully. Or without throwing up. You just have to act, and get something done.

Take tiny actions. Get stronger, and start taking food away from the fears. Nourish yourself by holding on to all those little bits of you.

And save panic for the tigers.

Thanks for listening to part two of the Emotional Turnaround track, called "Dealing With Fear." I'm Naomi from IttyBiz, and I'll talk to you very soon.