



FEAR: Silent assassin or guardian angel?

Fear gets a bad rep all the time... it is seen as the harbinger of all that goes wrong in life. We all have fears in some form or another and we are constantly told that fear holds us back from our dreams, that we should conquer our fear and all will be well! However, did you know that fear actually plays a key role in our lives?

Guardian Angel

Fear stops us from doing crazy things like jumping into a lion’s den unarmed, swimming outside of a cage with a great white shark or teasing a spitting cobra. **Have you ever fantasised about resigning from a job you hate in a truly dramatic way?** Steven Slater, a flight attendant, ended his 28 year career in 2010 after losing his cool with a very troublesome passenger. When the flight landed at JFK airport, he shared his thoughts in a 4-letter tirade via the inflight speaker system, then swiped a beer from the flight trolley, pulled the lever which released the emergency chute and slid down with his beer in his hand. It cost him a \$10,000 fine and hurt his future opportunities (in and out of the airline industry). Who would want to hire someone who behaves in such a volatile way? Don’t get me wrong, given the atrocious behaviour he received from a passenger on that flight, it may be natural to lose your cool. However, there is a right way and a wrong way to respond.

Fear helps us to reason whether our career fantasies are a good idea or not. They are the border guards making sure we don’t do anything too rash. Equally, our fears can give us that push that we need to complete something. For example, fear of career stagnation prompts us to push for that promotion or volunteer ourselves to run a project.

Silent Assassin

Fear does not get a “get-out-of-jail” card however. Absolutely not. When Fear is allowed to run wild and take control, it morphs into a cruel and silent assassin. Like a boa constrictor, it winds around and around tightening its grip. It does it so stealthily that you don’t even notice you are lassoed until something happens like you lose your job and you stumble. Fear can keep you jailed in Panic Mode and make it extra hard to get back up. The opposite can also happen, Fear can hold us so tight that we feel that we **MUST** keep achieving the next goal, and then the next goal and then the one after that because whatever we achieve is not enough. These may seem like two extreme cases, but they are not. They are increasingly common and both deliver the same outcome – Fear holds you back from progressing forward in life and work in a healthy, fulfilling, empowering manner.

Which one is it?

Fear is not just a guardian angel or a silent assassin, it is BOTH. It switches between the two depending which one you ALLOW it to be. The best thing to do is to acknowledge its presence in your life and nurture it to your advantage. It is not the existence of Fear itself that should concern us, but more importantly, it is the AMOUNT of Fear we have in our lives and our RELATIONSHIP with it. A small amount keeps us on our toes and too much chains us down.

Can FEAR be moulded into a support structure that enables us to thrive?

YES! First, **identify** which fears govern you (yes, we all have more than one type of fear). I share the 8 most common career/life fears here:

• Fear of the unknown	• Fear of uncertainty/instability
• Fear of failure	• Fear of stagnation
• Fear of invisibility	• Fear of vulnerability
• Fear of expectation	• Fear of success

Second, **Counter** the fear. There are a multitude of ways you can do this and below is a list of some great starting points.

- Educate yourself. Take a course, read articles, attend talks and workshops – when you learn about something “unknown”, by default, it becomes “known” and therefore not so “scary”.
- Exercise – Obvious I know, but a great workout releases endorphins which put us in a good mood, and empowers us. This gives us the oomph we may need to take action. Keep working out until you Oomph!
- Socialise – Fear loves solitude so counter it by surrounding yourself with good and trustworthy friends and inspiring individuals. Your network is your net worth. If you want to increase your self worth then increase the **quality** of those who surround you.
- Do something new – Breaking a habit activates our brains and it pays attention to the surroundings. Attention often leads to a new perspective. This too can break Fear’s gridlock.
- Take a moment – Sit somewhere quietly with a blank piece of paper and a pen and ask yourself “What 10 practical things can I do that may help to change my situation?” The key word here is “may” because all ideas are worth noting down, even the crazy ones. Often the best path forward is one which is a combination of 2-3 of your answers. Don’t be disheartened if you don’t come up with anything at first. This is normal and it takes a few go’s to switch off the panic mode you are in. Don’t give up though. Practice.

Sometimes just a small change in your habits will give you the nudge you need to step up. Other times having a professional coach by your side and holding you accountable to yourself can break down those walls.

Thirdly, **stay aware!** Just like a well-trained assassin, fear will try and find other methods to attack when one method has been conquered by you.

Fourthly, and most sustainably, **make Fear a friend of yours**. Fear is often rooted in experiences and perceptions from our childhood so, Fear continues to see you as a child. Like a big brother, it protects you from harm but can easily be too overprotecting. When you **allow your intuition to help you make decisions**, fear relaxes and becomes a friend.

Change your perception of Fear and see it as a life tool that is simply there to remind you to live fully, rediscover your purpose and carve new ways, paths and prisms to experience the world and live your life. It will hold you back until you are ready for the jump! It waits for you, nudging you forward until you have the knowledge and insight you need to quantum leap forward. Just like big bro, you need to also remind fear when you are “old” enough to make an informed decision.

So how do we know when to take action?

Trust your gut. Your **intuition** will guide you.

When you next wonder why you are not being considered for a project, role or promotion, ask yourself: “Was it because I didn’t speak up?”, “Did I not express my interest clearly enough?”, “Did I think that it was too big for me?”

“Was there really an opportunity or did my fear stop me from raising my hand and opening my mouth to speak?”

Next steps

- Are you ready to stand up and show your value? If so, then go for it!
- If Fear still holds you back, ask yourself 3 things in each instance.
 - Which fears are holding me back?
 - Are they being an angel or an assassin?
 - What am I going to do about it?
- If you are unsure and/or confused with your answers or feel you aren’t getting any answers, reach out to a coach. Its time to partner up and tackle your Fears as a team.

Victoria Fellowes

+44 (0)7816 783113

victoria@stride-forth.com

www.stride-forth.com