

## Ep #5 Overcoming Fear



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**With Your Host**

**Brooke Castillo**

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Welcome to The Life Coach School podcast, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Brooke: Hey, everyone. It's Brooke Castillo. Really happy that you're here today. I am going to be talking to you about fear. Of all the topics I discuss, this is probably the most common. What's cool and interesting about talking about fear and overcoming fear is that most of us don't talk about it, and when we do, we talk about it as if it's just a given; I'm just afraid to do that, therefore, that's a valid reason not to do something. What I want to offer is that fear is not a valid reason for not doing something; it's not a valid reason for not taking action. In fact, fear is just a mismanaged mind; that's all it really is. It just reflects that you're not managing your mind properly.

A lot of people say that we should honor our fear and we should take into account our fear and cuddle our fear. I'm all for feeling fear. I think that it's one of those emotions that most of us don't feel, and I'm going to talk about that in a second, but I do not think that it is a reason or a valid excuse for not doing our work in the world. When I ask students of mine why they aren't taking action on their businesses, with their clients, with their websites, they tell me, oh, the reason is because I'm afraid of failure, as if that's a valid reason, or I'm afraid of success. Look, it's fine. It's fine to be afraid of success. It's fine to be afraid of failure, but you're going to need to do it anyway. That's actually a book title, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*.

I really do think that that's one of those concepts that you have to wrap your mind around. Fear does not mean that something has gone wrong. Fear means that you're a human being and you're wired for survival. Up until the very recent present, you have needed fear in order to run away from things that were going to eat you, to take care of you. Still

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today, fear serves you in so many ways. It keeps you from jumping off of the top of cliffs; it keeps you from running into traffic; it keeps you from driving 3000 miles an hour on the freeway. I don't think you can go 3000 miles an hour. Okay, 150 miles an hour on the freeway after you've had 12 martinis. Fear actually serves us in so many ways, but nowadays it's not as necessary as it used to be and yet we're still really programmed for it.

I think first and foremost, just accepting that fear is going to be a part of your life and that irrational fear is going to be a part of your life will really help you moving forward. Fear does not mean stop. I can't say that enough. Actually, you don't have to be fearless before you take action. In fact, sometimes taking action while you're acknowledging your fear is one of the most powerful things that you can do.

Let me just talk a little bit about what I think most of us do when it comes to fear. First and foremost, you need to remember what we talked about in the first episodes where we talked about all of our feelings come from our thinking; when we think a thought, that causes our emotion. Most of the fear that we feel ... There is an exception, but most of the fear that we feel comes from a thought we have in our mind. Most of those thoughts are irrational. If you think about the majority of your fear is coming from something you are thinking that is irrational or illogical, you can just let that blow your mind for a minute. You are creating your own fear with your mind and letting it stop you.

There is an exception, and it is when the fight -or-flight response gets engaged. That's when you get a stimulus that completely bypasses the thinking part of your brain, the thalamus, completely just skips it and goes straight to the amygdala. An example of this might be when you're walking down your hallway and it's dark and your 13-year-old son jumps out of his doorway into your face and screams and he has a unicorn mask on with bloodshot eyes in it, which is a creepy thing in and of itself, and you jump 20 feet in the air. Your brain doesn't have time to process that; it just goes straight to run, get the hell out of there. That is something that we have been programmed and evolved to do. It's actually good for us to be able to

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react and have that adrenaline pump through us so we can get the heck out of there, because that unicorn could have been a tiger back in the day. It really helps us to be able to protect ourselves.

In the case of being at home with your son with a unicorn mask jumping out of the doorway, it's completely unnecessary. It's I don't need to run; I'm not going to be harmed. My brain doesn't know that, so there are times when there is a stimulus that will completely bypass the thinking part of the brain. I am not going to be talking about that type of fear here on this call because that's not the majority of the fear that we are experiencing. That's not to say that we don't create our own reaction in our body like that. By thinking really fearful thoughts, we create that stimulus, that response in our body that causes all sorts of issues.

One of the things that's great about fear, that's awesome about fear, is it gets us moving quickly. We get that shot of adrenaline, our muscles tense up. We become more alert and we have that kind of stimulating energy that can get us the heck out of danger. That's a good thing, unless we are sitting in our suburban kitchen thinking about what someone might say to us at a party and we're having that same reaction, or we're thinking about the business we're building and we're having that same reaction over and over and over again. That's where fear and creating fear with our minds does not serve us. That's when I said in the beginning, fear is not a valid reason for not taking action; it just means you have a mismanaged mind.

What I mean by that is those thoughts that you're having, that you're choosing to think, are creating fear that is stopping you from taking action. In that case, I don't want you to honor that fear. I don't want you to cuddle that fear. I don't want you to spend a lot of time in that fear. I want you to understand it enough so you can find its cause, find your thought patterns that are causing it and then change it. If you're not able to change it immediately, because it's a deeply patterned thought, I want you to take action anyway.

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There're two reasons why you can take action while you're still feeling fear and knowing that it's an illogical, irrational fear. The first reason is when you take action and you put yourself out there, all of the things that you're afraid of, all those irrational fears, get proven wrong. You're able to go out there and actually take action and see that you're not going to die by the hand of a tiger, the mouth of a tiger. You're going to be fine.

When you look into the science of fear and the psychology of fear and how it's studied, people who have really severe phobias, which is full-on irrational fear, one of the ways that they treat that is through something they call exposure therapy. If someone has an irrational fear of, say, spiders or snakes, they will actually expose them to the spiders and expose them to the snakes in a safe environment so they can now make a new association that snakes aren't scary. That's actually the same thing that we can do to ourselves by doing the very thing that we're, quote unquote, "irrationally afraid of." We can expose ourselves to it and learn that it's not scary.

When you really think about the things that you're afraid of, they are very irrational. We're terrified of public speaking. We're terrified of putting ourselves out there and having someone see us in a certain way, but when you really think that through, what's the worst thing that could happen? You get up there on the stage and ... Really, even if everybody is laughing at you, if you think about it, you're not in any harm's way, you're not going to die from that. Yet, some people are more afraid of public speaking than they are of dying. There's that illogical crisscross that's happened.

Think about all of the things that you're afraid of, whether it comes to your business or your life or meeting new people or putting yourself out there or being seen, what you're really afraid of has nothing to do with life or death, typically. It has nothing to do with whether you're going to survive or not. The main things that we're afraid of are our own creations, our own feelings. When we think about public speaking and we think about making a mistake and everybody laughing at us, what we're really terrified of in that situation is the feeling of humiliation, which is, again, a feeling we would

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create by what we would make it mean if everyone was laughing at us. We don't really think this through. We just stop at fear.

Taking action while you're still feeling fear is actually a skill that you can develop. Most of us are still reacting to our kneejerk reaction. When there's fear, you either run or you stop, don't do it, which, again, is a very useful signal when there is real danger. When there's not real danger, when we can think about what's really the worst that can happen and we can really think about it, once we get to that point, then we can take action and feel the fear along the way.

I will say in my life, being able to take action while I'm still feeling a little bit of fear, while I'm still feeling a little bit of nervousness and knowing that it's just being caused by a thought in my mind, has made me, I think, much more successful than I would have been otherwise because I allow myself to put myself out there even though I'm having that illogical fear come up that I am creating.

The other really important thing to know about fear is that most of us don't actually feel it. When I ask my clients: "Tell me what fear feels like," what they actually describe to me is the resistance to fear. They know that when fear comes up, they either avoid it or push it away. What happens when any kind of vibration comes up in your body that is fear, there is actually a fear of feeling fear. If you listen to some scientists describe what fear is as a reaction in the body, it's an increased heart rate; it's a tensing of the muscles. For some people it's a tingling sensation on the skin.

When I describe it like that, it's, well, what's the big deal? Why are we all freaked out about an increased heart rate and our muscles tensing up? It's because most of us don't actually sit there and say, okay, I'm going to experience this fear; I'm going to allow myself to really let it flow through me. Most of us, when any kind of fear comes up, we run away from it and we avoid it, which makes sense; that's how we're programmed. So many of my clients eat when they feel fear instead of feeling it. So many of my clients drink alcohol instead of feeling it. Many of my clients work instead of

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feeling it. When you learn how to really just embrace it and not resist it or avoid it, you will see that there's very little to fear when it comes to fear.

I'd like to actually recommend that you try doing that, you try to just sit and be present with yourself while you're feeling fear, while you're experiencing it, and let me know what it's like to experience it. You can actually put it in the Comments underneath the Show Notes at [thelifecoachschool.com/#5](http://thelifecoachschool.com/#5). What does fear really feel like when you allow yourself to feel it? Notice when you're feeling it the desire to resist it, to avoid it, to put it away. It's fascinating. I've done this with myself many times and just noticed how afraid I am to feel it.

The other thing that's interesting about emotion is ... and I kind of referenced this earlier with the idea of humiliation and public speaking ... is that many of us have a fear not only of it feeling fear, but we have a fear of feeling pain; we have a fear of being hurt. When you think about how we layer on emotions on top of other emotions, we'll say ... I watch my children do this when they're getting blood drawn. The fear of the pain is actually worse than the pain itself. They'll be, oh, my god, oh, my god, here comes the needle, here comes the needle, I'm totally freaking out, oh, my god. Then once the needle is in, it's, oh, that did hurt a little bit but the freak-out beforehand was a lot worse than the actual experience of having the needle go in.

That's true for most of us with most emotions. The fear of feeling the emotion is sometimes so much worse than the emotion itself, so we hold ourselves back from being alive, from going towards anything, because we're afraid of how it might feel. Just notice that in your own life.

One of the most important things I think that we can do is to sit down and consider what we're really afraid of. I highly recommend that you just grab one sheet of paper, when you have some time, and at the top of it write, "What am I afraid of?" Just let yourself fill that paper up. Are you afraid of running out of money? Are you afraid of becoming obese? Are you afraid of being a bag lady? Are you afraid of someone hurting you? Really have a look at those fears.

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What you will have on your paper when you answer that is a list of thoughts, really, that cause fear. When you think about I think someone's going to hurt me, I think someone's going to betray me, I'm afraid of that. Really sit down and see if it's a logical fear. What are you really afraid of? If you allowed yourself to experience that fear and access that thought of the thing you're afraid of, notice is it holding you back in your life? Do you have any fears that are holding you back?

Some of you may have fears that are holding you back that you want to keep. I have a fear of running out in traffic. I think that's a valid fear. I have a fear of skydiving, and I've done it once and I don't want to do it again. I think that's not a fear that I think is holding me back in my life. I also have a fear of not knowing what to say when I meet new people. I'm actually an introvert when I meet new people in an environment that is uncertain to me. I have this fear of that, and that does hold me back in my life. I see it holding me back. I see myself avoiding those situations and not showing up as myself in those situations.

That's one of those fears that are completely irrational. What's the worst thing that can happen when I introduce myself to someone? The worst thing that could happen is they could say, oh, I don't want to talk to you. Why is that scary? Because of what I make it mean? Well, that's on me. People have the right to do whatever they want. When I think those fears through, I recognize that that is something that I can definitely move towards, and it's a fear that I want to work on. When I say it's a fear, what I really mean is it's a thought that I'm entertaining. I'm not really deliberately entertaining it, but I'm letting it come into my mind and entertain itself and I'm not deliberately creating something to oppose it.

That's one of the things that's great about writing down all of the things that you're afraid of. It kind of reveals your mind to you, and so you can see what is going on in there that you may not even be aware of. Then from there, you can change it, you can change that.

The truth is, fear is not a big deal. It's a vibration in your body caused by a thought. In fact, some of us actually really like experiencing fear on

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purpose. We go on roller coasters; we watch really scary movies; we like to watch other people be afraid; we jump out of bushes and scare them. We do things that cause us to experience fear; it's like that adrenaline.

For me, I think one of the coolest things in the world is to overcome fear. I think that's where all the good stuff is. I think all of the good stuff in my life is on the other side of that fear that I'm creating. I'm creating my own fear with my mind, and on the other side of that creation is everything I want. When I look at most of the things in my life that I want, the reason why I don't have them is because I'm afraid to either do the work that's required to get them, put myself out there in a way that would make it easier to get, talk to the right people, do the things that would catapult me into that space. If all I have to do is overcome those fears, then I'm going to be all set.

If you are listening to this and you're thinking, well, I don't think it's fear that's holding me back; I think it's something more like just not being sure what I want to do, just not understanding if this is the right decision, or I'm just confused, I want to give you a warning here. I've done this on some of the other podcasts, but I'm going to continue to do it as we go through. That's how many of us avoid feeling fear. Really, we have this fear that we need to overcome in order to get the result we want, but instead of acknowledging and owning that fear and moving towards it, what we do is we hang out in front of it and tell ourselves that we're confused or we don't know or we can't make a decision. As long as we're saying that, then we have an excuse not to move through our fear.

You can't avoid fear and get anywhere. You can't go around it, under it, resist it, pretend it isn't there. You have to go through it, and you can't go through it if you're telling yourself you're confused. You can't go through it if you're telling yourself that you don't know what the right decision is. The reason why you don't want to make a decision, if you really think it through, is because you're afraid you'll make the wrong decision. The reason why you don't know something is because you haven't figured it out, and there's a reason why you haven't figured it out. Don't let those avoidance thoughts

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keep you from experiencing fear. Fear is something that you want to walk towards, you want to embrace, you want to explore. It will open your mind up to you. If you allow yourself to feel it, then you can ask yourself why you're feeling it.

One of the best secrets of the universe is that in our day and age, fear is unnecessary in about ninety percent of the situations, that we create it. Fear is not something that we really need in our day-to-day lives. It's something that's part of our evolution, so it's there and we can experience it in a whole new way. It's, I think, our next stage. It's one of those things that we have to learn how to live with because it's part of us, but we also have to learn that it's no big deal, that we're going to be okay, and that we can keep taking action even though we are experiencing it because there really is nothing to be afraid of.

Just like when we're watching a scary movie, we don't have to run out of the theater screaming; we can experience the scary movie and we can sit there and say it's not real. I actually have to do this. I don't like scary movies, but when I'm in them I have to tell myself, these are just actors, that's just ketchup, this is not really happening, this is just pretend. You can use that same exact skill in your life. You're not going to die. It's going to be okay. You can send this email to this person and everything is going to be fine. You're not going to die. They're not going to die. Nothing horrible and gruesome is going to happen. I just have to remind myself this is just the perception of fear. This isn't actually valid. This isn't actually useful fear that's going to save your life. This fear is just, like Eckhart Tolle would say, pretending to be necessary and it's not necessary.

If you can learn to embrace it and expose yourself to it over and over and over again, you will be limitless. When you look at people who have really created the life that they want to create, something that you really admire, you will say, gosh, they're fearless. The truth is, nobody is fearless. We all have fear. I think that's kind of reassuring. I think looking at people that are crazy successful and super prominent in their industry, who have created so many things in their life, to remember that they are feeling fear

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because they're a human being just as often as we are. They're creating their own fear just as often as we are; they're just not using it as a reason to stop. They're just not using it as a reason not to become fully who they are. That's reassuring to me, knowing that they have fear and they're doing it anyway.

Here's what I want you to do. I want you to sit down, do the list, and write down everything that you're afraid of. Then I want you to consider what it would be like to embrace that fear, take it with you, take it with you as your companion. Instead of trying to resist it, acknowledge it, expose it for what it is, and continue to move forward, continue to take it with you. Fear in and of itself is nothing to be afraid of, so don't let it hold you back.

I'm excited to hear what you guys think about this. I'm excited to have you guys put it into action. Please let me know in the Comments how it's going. I'd love to talk to you all. Until next time, be afraid, but do it anyway.

Talk to you soon. Bye.

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