

# HOW TO DEFEAT FEAR

Most of us struggle with fear in one way or another – whether it's the fear of what other people think of you, the fear you're not enough, the fear of failure or fears and about what might happen in the future.

When fear rears its head we can become overwhelmed or debilitated by it or find ourselves consumed in struggling against it.

But these ways of dealing with fear often only make it bigger and prolong it. They also tend to limit our full potential and lock us into unhelpful patterns and behaviours.

But there is a way to defeat fear.

## THE STUDENT WARRIOR'S BATTLE WITH FEAR

There's an old Buddhist story about this.

Once there was a young warrior. Her teacher told her that she had to do battle with fear. She didn't want to do that. It seemed too aggressive; it was scary; it seemed unfriendly.

But the teacher said she had to do it and gave her the instructions for the battle. The day arrived. The student warrior stood on one side, and fear stood on the other. The warrior was feeling very small, and fear was looking big and wrathful.

They both had their weapons. The young warrior roused herself and went toward fear, prostrated three times, and asked, "May I have permission to go into battle with you?"

Fear said, "Thank you for showing me so much respect that you ask permission."

Then the young warrior said, "How can I defeat you?"

Fear replied, "My weapons are that I talk fast, and I get very close to your face. Then you get completely unnerved, and you do whatever I say.

If you don't do what I tell you, I have no power. You can listen to me, and you can have respect for me. You can even be convinced by me. But if you don't do what I say, I have no power."

In that way, the student warrior learned how to defeat fear.

## SHIFTING OUR RELATIONSHIP TO FEAR

While fear is a perfectly natural emotion, when it takes us over it hijacks our ability to act with awareness, purpose and clarity.

But if we can learn to respond to fear instead of reacting to it, fear loosens its grip on us, it no longer takes us over and we reconnect with awareness, calm and inner strength.

## HOW?

We don't need to be overwhelmed by fear, push it away or escape from it, instead we can train ourselves to attend to it with awareness and compassion.

In this way we are able to take a step back and see fear so we are not hijacked by it.

We also can see fear from a new perspective. We see that it is made up of physical sensations in the body, there may also be associated thoughts and although the sensations can be intense and unpleasant ultimately fear does not have much power over us unless we react to it.

## THE THREE STEP PAUSE PRACTICE

The next time you feel fear arising in you day to day life, whether it's in the form of worry, social anxiety, fear that your not good enough or stress that things won't go the way you want, I encourage you to try this simple three step pause practice.

### STEP 1 'Name it to tame it'

Take a pause, take a deep slow breath and mentally note to yourself, 'ok fear is arising.'

This is a way of bringing mindful acceptance to what is happening and helps you take a step back from it. As the old saying goes, you can 'name it to tame it.'

### STEP 2 Meet fear with love

Next, see if you can bring a sense of compassion towards yourself and the fear.

Instead of resisting fear in any way or seeing it as bad, think of having the attitude towards it that you would have towards a loved one who was hurting. Meet the fear with love.

It can be helpful to imagine that you are breathing compassion and tenderness into and out from where you feel the sensations of the emotion most strongly. Another approach is to place a hand where you feel those sensations.

### STEP 3 Do it anyway

Remember when fear told the student warrior "if you do not do what I say I have no power" it was in this way that she learned how to defeat fear.

Defeating fear is not about eliminating it. It's about living a meaningful and fulfilling life despite fear being a part of our experience.

So even though fear may be present, aim to **reconnect with what matters to you and take action guided by your values and your heart's desires in the moment.**

That might be asking someone out despite the nerves, engaging in a conversation despite feeling a little anxiety or going for a job you are worried you're not good enough to land.

It might be making the choice to let go of overthinking and worry and come back to focus on the people, the surroundings and the moment that you're in right now.

## THIS WEEK'S INVITATION: MEET FEAR WITH AWARENESS AND COMPASSION

As you go about daily life this week, keep training yourself to meet fear with mindfulness and compassion and as best you can, let your actions be defined by your values rather than your fears, because as buddhist author and teacher Pema Chödrön says "Being courageous and having a great life is all about being intimate with fear in a wise and graceful way."

Feel the fear, and then do what needs to get done. Rather than being depressed about fear, lean into it, and see it as an opportunity to learn and grow.”

As always thank you for your practice and your presence here in this community.

Wishing you a wonderful practice with this.

Big love,

Melli

P.S. You can get all my meditations, talks, courses and daily mindfulness coaching at [Mindfulness.com](https://www.mindfulness.com). It's free to join so come on over and [give it a try today](#).