

Letting Go of Fear

By Ingrid Bacci PhD., CST

Life is an adventure, and it's meant to be approached as such...with excitement, curiosity, and joy. Yet because life involves change and growth, and because change and growth bring us into the unknown, we often put up resistance to what could be fun. The name of that resistance is *fear*. We fear the unknown. Consider the first time children are introduced to swimming. They often kick or scream in fear, thinking something terrible is going to happen to them...all because it's unknown. Yet once they get into the water, and start paddling about, you can't get them out!

We're like those children. We resist change, even though, if we accepted it, we might find ourselves thrilled with the result. Many of us dread something which, once it happens, leaves us unexpectedly delighted! A good friend recently was terminated from a job she couldn't stand. She was sticking with it 'until something better comes along.' Meanwhile, however, her energies were so drained by doing work she disliked, that she wasn't able to focus effectively on finding work that would suit her, even though she told herself she needed to do that before she left her job. Yet when the axe fell, and she was finally let go, she felt surprisingly light and free, even without a job! Her energies were liberated, she launched out on her own, and soon she was boss of her own thriving consulting business!

Another friend was temporarily heartbroken when her sweetheart terminated their relationship. But after a few months of mourning, she felt *so much better than she had felt during that entire relationship!* She realized that, for all the bright moments in that

love affair, the bottom line was that her partner had been way too demanding. He had sucked her dry. Now that he was no longer around, she could fly like a bird. What a relief!

Both of these stories are about changes that friends had to undergo, *changes that they feared*. Yet when those changes happened, my two friends found themselves in a much happier place. What keeps us fearing and resisting change that may actually open us up to a better life? The answer to that question lies in our *habits*. We hold on to our habits, even if they cause us pain. Why? Because we developed many of those habits long ago, at a time when they had some survival value for us. Unconsciously, we continue—usually mistakenly—to assume that maintaining those habits will also continue to ensure our survival. Freud called this “repetition compulsion” – the need to repeat old patterns of behavior even when they are self-destructive.

Here’s an example. One of my clients grew up severely criticized by his parents. Everything he did was wrong! As a little child, desperate for love, he did everything he could to please his judgmental, hostile parents. Given his situation, he became terribly fearful of speaking up for himself. Today, this same man is in a relationship with an abusive, manipulative woman, who mercilessly criticizes and controls his every action. Although this upsets him, he constantly focuses his energy on keeping the peace and trying to make her happy. Intellectually he knows that he should speak out if he wants things to get better. Emotionally, however, the thought of defending himself in even the smallest way raises terror in his heart. It feels like the sky will come down on him if he protests her treatment, because the sky *did* fall down on him so many times *as a child*.

Now, as a grown man, he's stuck in his childhood patterns. He's his own victim, in his own prison. He's stuck in fear, and fear is his real problem.

It's fear that keeps us from growing. That fear is usually ungrounded, even though we may rationalize it by a thousand "what if's". What if I lose my money on the stock market? What if my partner abandons me? What if they don't like me? What if I die and there's nothing on the other side? All these questions express *negative anticipation of an unknown!* But think of this! What if we instead approached the unknown as a great adventure with tremendous potential? What if we saw every turn in the road as bringing new possibilities into our lives? After all, isn't that often the case?! How would our lives change if we began *anticipating rather than fearing* the unknown? Just try it!

Those of you who have read my books know that I teach how to leave all forms of fear behind, and to actualize your true—and truly remarkable-- potential. I invite you to join me on this journey through subscribing to my free email newsletter, downloading my free articles and MP3 downloads, reading my two books *The Art of Effortless Living* and *Effortless Pain Relief*, availing yourself of the other products on my website, and considering working with me in person through private consultation or in a workshop. In the meantime, may your journey be increasingly effortless!