

**FEEL**  *30th Anniversary Edition*  
**THE FEAR**  
**...AND DO IT**  
**ANYWAY®**

Dynamic techniques for turning  
Fear, Indecision and Anger into  
*Power, Action and Love*

*with a new Foreword by the author*

**Susan Jeffers, Ph.D.**

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**FEEL THE FEAR ... AND DO IT  
ANYMAY®**

**Dynamic techniques for turning Fear, Indecision  
and Anger into Power, Action and Love**

**Susan Jeffers, Ph.D.**

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*Praise for*

# **FEEL THE FEAR . . . AND DO IT ANYMAY®**

“Living is taking chances, and *Feel the Fear...and Do It Anyway* has helped so many people, both men and women, to achieve success.”

— LOUISE L. HAY  
Author of *You Can Heal Your Life*

“Should be required for every person who can read! I recommend this book in every one of my seminars!”

— JACK CANFIELD  
Co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

“It’s a must! The most practical guide to personal empowerment I have ever read. *Feel the Fear . . . and Do It Anyway* goes to number one on my recommended reading list.”

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*Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway:* How to Turn Your Fear and Indecision into Confidence and Action\*

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*For the wonderful gifts of life and love, I dedicate this book to the loving memory of my mother, Jeanne, and my father, Leon.*

*I also dedicate this book to my jewel of a husband, Mark Shelmerdine, who brings so much love and joy into my life. I am truly blessed.*



# Foreword to the 20th-Anniversary Edition

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I do believe in miracles . . . and the success of *Feel the Fear . . . and Do It Anyway* is a miracle to me. So many publishers rejected it in the beginning that I almost gave up trying to have it published. After all, if you received a rejection letter, as I did, that said, “Lady Di could be cycling nude down the street giving this book away, nobody would read it,” wouldn’t you be tempted to give up trying?

I actually did put the manuscript away in a drawer for a few years and almost forgot about it. One day, I decided to clean out that particular drawer . . . and there it was . . . waiting for me. I sat down and read through it again. I couldn’t push away the feeling that my book had something important to say. This time I made a vow to myself: “Somehow I am going to find a way to get *Feel the Fear . . . and Do It Anyway* out into the world!” And so I “felt the fear” and tried once again to find a publisher. And this time, with a deep inner resolve and with the help of my agent, Dominick Abel, I found a publisher at last.

Twenty years have passed since *Feel the Fear . . . and Do It Anyway* was actually published. It is now in more than one hundred countries and has been translated into more than thirty languages. And that number continues to grow. From this continuous growth, one can conclude that the words I wrote so long ago are as relevant today as they were then . . . if not more so!

Fear will always be a part of all of our lives in one form or another. And this applies to people everywhere. From the letters of thanks I receive from all over the world, it is clear that no matter who we are, no matter where we live, no matter what we are experiencing in life, we all feel fear, but fear doesn’t need to hold us back from living a rich and beautiful life. We can overcome our fears by regularly using the powerful tools that lie within these pages.

I thank those who have communicated with me for generously letting me know that *Feel the Fear . . . and Do It Anyway* has made a huge

difference in the quality of your lives. It brings me a special feeling of joy and humility to know that I have touched the lives of so many people.

And for you “beginners” who are opening this book for the first time, trust me when I tell you that fear doesn’t have to hold you back. You, too, can learn how to push through your fears—*all* of your fears—with a sense of power, excitement, and love. And that’s what this book is all about.

As you will discover, the concepts and tools you are about to learn are meant to be used for a lifetime. Learn them well. And every time a new challenge comes into your life, you need only reach into your “toolbox” and move yourself from the weakest to the strongest part of who you are. As you do so, you will be absolutely amazed at the incredible amount of power you hold inside: power to love, power to succeed, power to help the world in your own special way. The journey to the best of who you are is exciting and rewarding, and I am so happy to be walking right along with you as you take those first important steps.

From my heart to yours,

## Introduction

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# OPENING THE DOOR

What is it for you?

Fear of . . .  
public speaking  
asserting yourself  
making decisions  
intimacy  
changing jobs  
being alone  
aging  
driving  
losing a loved one  
ending a relationship?

Is it some of the above? All of the above? Perhaps you could add a few more to the list. Never mind . . . join the crowd! Fear seems to be epidemic in our society. We fear beginnings; we fear endings. We fear changing; we fear “staying stuck.” We fear success; we fear failure. We fear living; we fear dying.

*Whatever* the fear, this book will give you the insight and tools to vastly improve your ability to handle any given situation. You will move from a place of pain, paralysis, and depression (feelings that often accompany fear) to one of power, energy, and excitement.

You may be surprised and encouraged to learn that while inability to deal with fear may look and feel like a psychological problem, in most cases it isn't. I believe it is primarily an educational problem, and that by reeducating the mind, you can accept fear as simply a fact of life rather than a barrier to success. (This should be a relief to all of you out there who have been wondering “What’s wrong with me?”)

My conviction that fear can be dealt with through reeducation came about through my own experiences. When I was younger, I was always run by fear, so it wasn't surprising that for years I hung on to many things in my life that clearly were not working for me.

Part of my problem was the nonstop little voice inside my head that kept telling me, "YOU'D BETTER NOT CHANGE YOUR SITUATION. THERE'S NOTHING ELSE OUT THERE FOR YOU. YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT ON YOUR OWN." You know the one I'm talking about—the one that keeps reminding you, "DON'T TAKE A CHANCE. YOU MIGHT MAKE A MISTAKE. BOY, WILL YOU BE SORRY!"

My fear never seemed to abate, and I didn't have a moment's peace. Even my doctorate in psychology didn't seem to do me much good. Then one day, as I was dressing for work, I reached the turning point. I happened to glance in the mirror, and I saw an all-too-familiar sight—eyes red and puffy from tears of self-pity. Suddenly rage welled up inside me, and I began shouting at my reflection, "ENOUGH . . . ENOUGH . . . ENOUGH!" I shouted until I had no more energy (or voice) left.

When I stopped, I felt a strange and wonderful sense of relief and calm I had never felt before. Without realizing it at the time, I had gotten in touch with a very powerful part of myself that before that moment I hadn't even known existed. I took another long look in the mirror and smiled as I nodded my head YES. The old familiar voice of doom and gloom was drowned out, at least temporarily, and a new voice had come to the fore—one that spoke of strength and love and joy and all good things. At that moment I knew I was not going to let fear get the best of me. I would find a way to rid myself of the negativism that prevailed in my life. Thus, my odyssey began.

An ancient sage once said, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." The student was ready, and teachers appeared from all over the place. I began to read, attend workshops, and talk to as many people as would listen. Diligently following every suggestion and lead, I *unlearned* the thinking that had been keeping me a prisoner of my own insecurities. I began to see the world as a less threatening and more joyous place; I started to see myself as someone who had purpose; and I experienced the meaning of love for the first time in my life.

At this point I began to notice many other people struggling with the same barriers I had finally learned to push through—the main barrier being

fear. How could I help them? Realizing that the processes that had transformed my life were educational in nature, I was convinced that the same techniques I had used could be taught to anyone, regardless of age, sex, or background. I was able to test my theory in the real world by teaching a course at The New School for Social Research, in New York City. Called “Feel the Fear . . . and Do It Anyway,” the course was described as follows:

Whenever we take a chance and enter unfamiliar territory or put ourselves into the world in a new way, we experience fear. Very often this fear keeps us from moving ahead with our lives. The trick is to FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY. Together we will explore the barriers that keep us from experiencing life the way we want to live it. So many of us short-circuit our living by choosing the path that is the most comfortable. Through readings, class discussions, and interesting exercises we will learn to identify our excuses for “staying stuck” and develop the techniques for taking control of our own lives.

My experiment with taking the concept of fear out of the realm of therapy and placing it in the area of education was extremely successful. My students were amazed at how shifting their thinking magically reshaped their lives. The concepts worked for them as they had worked for me. And, not surprisingly, my students also became my teachers. They reaffirmed and added to my fund of knowledge as I listened carefully to their wisdom.

Those of you who are reading this book have acknowledged that wherever you are in life at this moment is not exactly the place you want to be. Something needs changing, and until now you haven’t been able to take the steps to change it. Whatever your circumstances, you are ready to start taking charge of your life.

I’m not promising that change is easy. It takes courage to mold your life the way you want it to be. There are all sorts of real and imagined obstacles that get in the way. They need not deter you. In your journey through this book you will become familiar with many concepts, exercises, and other devices to help you unravel the complexities of fear . . . and thus help you deal with it.

You will learn:

how it can be impossible to make a mistake or a wrong decision  
how to let go of negative programming  
how it is impossible to be conned  
how to say “yes” to all circumstances in your life  
how to raise your level of self-esteem  
how to become more assertive  
how to connect with the powerhouse within  
how to create more love, trust, and satisfaction  
how to deal with resistance from significant others as you  
take more control of your life  
how to experience more enjoyment  
how to make your dreams become a reality  
how to see yourself as having purpose and meaning

As you read, underline those sections of the book that “speak” to you, so that later you can easily find critical passages to help you face new situations in life. It takes a lot of reinforcement to incorporate new concepts into your behavior, so commit yourself to doing the exercises. The amount of improvement you experience will depend on how much you are willing to actively participate. Also, the more you get involved, the more fun you will have. You will be surprised and pleased at the amount of satisfaction that comes as you take each little step forward.

No matter what degree of insecurity you are feeling, a part of you knows there is a lot of wonderful “stuff” within you just waiting to be let out, and NOW is the perfect time for opening the door to the power and love within.

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**WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF ...  
AND WHY?**

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it I'll handle it I'll handle it I'll handle it I'll handle it I'll handle it I'll handle it

I am about to teach another fear class. The classroom is empty. I am waiting for my new group of students to appear. My nervousness about teaching these classes disappeared a long time ago. Not only have I taught it many times, but I also know my students before I meet them. They are like the rest of us: all trying to do the best they can and all uncertain about whether they're good enough. It never varies.

As the students enter the room, I can feel the tension. They sit as far apart from one another as possible, until the seats between must be filled because of lack of space. They don't talk to one another, but sit nervously, expectantly. I love them for their courage to admit that their lives are not working the way they want them to work. And their presence in the class signifies that they are ready to do something about it.

I begin by going around the room asking each student to tell the rest of us what he or she is having difficulty confronting in life. Their stories unfold:

Don wants to change his career of fourteen years and follow his dream of becoming an artist.

Mary Alice is an actress who wants to discover why she finds all kinds of excuses for not attending auditions.

Sarah wants to leave a marriage of fifteen years.

Teddy wants to get over his fear of aging. He is all of thirty-two.

Jean is a senior citizen who wants to confront her doctor; he treats her like a child and never gives her any straight answers.

Patti wants to expand her business, but can't make the required leap to the next step.

Rebecca wants to confront her husband with things that have been bothering her.

Kevin wants to get over a fear of rejection that makes it very difficult to ask a woman for a date.

Laurie wants to know why she is unhappy when she has everything one could possibly want in life.

Richard is retired and feels useless. He fears his life is over.

And so it goes until everyone's story is heard.



I'm fascinated with what happens during the go-around. As each person shares from the heart, the entire atmosphere begins to change. The tension quickly fades and relief is expressed on everyone's face.

First, my students begin to realize that they are not the only ones in the world feeling afraid. Second, they begin to see how attractive people become as they open up and share their feelings. Long before the last person has spoken, a feeling of warmth and camaraderie pervades the room. They are strangers no more.

Although the backgrounds and situations of the class members vary greatly, it does not take long for the surface layers of their particular stories to disappear, opening the way for everyone to touch on a very human level. The common denominator is the fact that fear is keeping all of them from experiencing life the way they want to experience it.

The scenario above repeats itself in each fear class I teach. At this point you might be wondering how one course can accommodate all the diverse fears reported by the class members—their needs seem to be so varied. It's true. They do seem varied until we dig a little deeper and look at the underlying cause of all their fears—and everyone else's.

Fear can be broken down into three levels. The first level is the surface story, such as the ones described above. This level of fear can be divided into two types: those that “happen” and those that require action. Here is a partial list of Level 1 fears divided into these types:

## **LEVEL 1 FEARS**

### *Those that “Happen”*

Aging

Becoming disabled

Retirement

Being alone

Children leaving home

Natural disasters

Loss of financial security

Change

Dying

War

Illness

Losing a loved one  
Accidents  
Rape

*Those Requiring Action*

Going back to school  
Making decisions  
Changing a career  
Making friends  
Ending or beginning a relationship  
Going to the doctor  
Asserting oneself  
Losing weight  
Being interviewed  
Driving  
Public speaking  
Making a mistake  
Intimacy

You might have a few you can add to the list. As I hinted earlier, you wouldn't be alone if you said to yourself, "Some of the above" or even "All of the above." There is a reason for this. One of the insidious qualities of fear is that it tends to permeate many areas of our lives. For example, if you fear making new friends, it then stands to reason that you also may fear going to parties, having intimate relationships, applying for jobs, and so on.

This is made clearer by a look at the second layer of fear, which has a very different feel from that of Level 1. Level 2 fears are not situation-oriented; they involve the ego.

## **LEVEL 2 FEARS**

Rejection  
Being conned  
Success  
Helplessness  
Failure  
Disapproval

Being vulnerable  
Loss of image

Level 2 fears have to do with *inner states of mind* rather than exterior situations. They reflect your sense of self and your ability to handle this world. This explains why generalized fear takes place. If you are afraid of being rejected, this fear will affect almost every area of your life—friends, intimate relationships, job interviews, and so on. Rejection is rejection—wherever it is found. So you begin to protect yourself, and, as a result, greatly limit yourself. You begin to shut down and close out the world around you. Look over the Level 2 list once again, and you will see how any one of these fears can greatly impact many areas of your life.

Level 3 gets down to the nitty-gritty of the issue: the biggest fear of all—the one that really keeps you stuck. Are you ready?

## **LEVEL C FEAR**

### **I CAN'T HANDLE IT!**

“That’s it? That’s the big deal?” you may ask. I know you’re disappointed and wanted something much more dramatic than that. But the truth is this:

**AT THE BOTTOM OF EVERY ONE OF YOUR FEARS  
IS SIMPLY THE FEAR THAT YOU CAN'T HANDLE  
MHATEVER LIFE MAY BRING YOU.**

Let’s test this. The Level 1 fears translate to:

I can’t handle illness.  
I can’t handle making a mistake.  
I can’t handle losing my job.  
I can’t handle getting old.  
I can’t handle being alone.  
I can’t handle making a fool out of myself.  
I can’t handle not getting the job.  
I can’t handle losing him/her.  
I can’t handle losing my money . . . etc.

The Level 2 fears translate to:

I can't handle the responsibilities of success.

I can't handle failure.

I can't handle being rejected . . . etc.

Thus Level 3—simply, “I can't handle it!”

The truth is:

**IF YOU KNEW YOU COULD HANDLE ANYTHING  
THAT CAME YOUR WAY,  
WHAT WOULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE TO FEAR?**

The answer is: **NOTHING!**

I know you are probably not jumping up and down for joy just yet, but believe me when I tell you that I have just given you a great piece of news. What I have just told you means you can handle all your fears without having to control anything in the outside world. This should be a tremendous relief. You no longer have to control what your mate does, what your friends do, what your children do, or what your boss does. You don't have to control what happens at an interview, what happens at your job, what happens in your new career, what happens to your money, or what happens in the stock market.

**ALL YOU HAVE TO DO TO DIMINISH YOUR FEAR IS TO  
DEVELOP MORE TRUST IN YOUR ABILITY TO HANDLE  
WHATEVER COMES YOUR WAY!**

I am belaboring the point because it is so critical. From this moment on, every time you feel afraid, remind yourself that it is simply because you are not feeling good enough about yourself. Then proceed to use one or more of the tools in this book to help build yourself up. You have your task clearly mapped out for you. There is no reason for confusion.

I've often been asked to explain why we have so little trust in ourselves. I don't really know the answer to that. I know that some fear is instinctual and healthy, and keeps us alert to trouble. The rest—the part that holds us

back from personal growth—is inappropriate and destructive, and perhaps can be blamed on our conditioning.

In all my life I have never heard a mother call out to her child as he or she goes off to school, “Take a lot of risks today, darling.” She is more likely to convey to her child, “Be careful, darling.” This “Be careful” carries with it a double message: “The world is really dangerous out there” . . . *and* . . . “you won’t be able to handle it.” What Mom is really saying, of course, is, “If something happens to you, *I* won’t be able to handle it.” You see, she is only passing on her lack of trust in *her* ability to handle what comes her way.

I can remember wanting desperately to have a two-wheel bicycle and my mother’s refusal to buy me one. Her answer to my pleas was always the same: “I love you too much. I don’t want anything to happen to you.” I translated this to mean: “You are not competent enough to handle a two-wheel bike.” Having become older and wiser, I realize now that she was really saying: “If anything happens to you, *I* will fall apart.”

This overprotective mother of mine was once in intensive care after serious surgery, with tubes down her nose and her throat. When I was told it was time for me to leave, I whispered in her ear—not knowing if she could hear me—that I loved her and would be back later. As I was walking toward the door, I heard a small, weak voice behind me saying—you guessed it—“Be careful.” Even in her anesthetic stupor, she was sending me admonitions of doom and gloom. And I know she typifies the great percentage of mothers out there. Considering how many “be carefuls” our parents bombarded us with, it is amazing that we even manage to walk out the front door!

Apart from such seemingly obvious connections, the cause of our fear quite possibly lies elsewhere. But does it really matter where our self-doubts come from? I believe not. It is not my approach to analyze the whys and wherefores of troublesome areas of the mind. It is often impossible to figure out what the actual causes of negative patterns are, and even if we did know, the knowing doesn’t necessarily change them. I believe that if something is troubling you, simply start from where you are and take the action necessary to change it.

In this case, you know that you don’t like the fact that lack of trust in yourself is stopping you from getting what you want out of life. Knowing this creates a very clear, even laserlike, focus on what needs to be changed.

You don't have to scatter your energy wondering why. It doesn't matter. What matters is that you begin now to develop your trust in yourself, until you reach the point where you will be able to say:

**MHATEVER HAPPENS TO ME, GIVEN ANY SITUATION,  
I CAN HANDLE IT!**

I can hear the doubting Thomases out there saying, "Oh, come on now, how do you handle paralysis, or the death of a child, or cancer?" I understand your skepticism. Remember that I was once a doubting Thomas myself. Just read on and let the book unfold. Give yourself a winning chance by using the tools provided throughout this book. As you do, you will find yourself coming closer and closer to such a high level of self-confidence that you will ultimately begin to realize that you can handle *anything* that comes your way. Never let these three little words out of your mind—possibly the three most important little words you'll ever hear:

**I'LL HANDLE IT**

**2**

**CAN7 YOU MAKE IT GO AWAY?**

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**J**anet's still waiting for the fear to go away. She had always planned to return to college once her children were in school, but she now notices it's been four years since her youngest child entered first grade. New excuses have popped up since that time: "I want to be here when the children come home from school"; "We really don't have the money"; "My husband will feel neglected."

Although it is true that certain logistics would have to be worked out, that is not the reason for her hesitation. In fact, her husband is willing to help her in any way he can. He is concerned about her restlessness, and often encourages her to fulfill her lifelong dream of becoming a fashion designer.

Each time Janet thinks about calling the local college to set up an interview, something stops her. "When I'm not so frightened, then I'll make the call"; "When I feel a little better about myself, then I'll make the call." Most likely Janet is going to wait a very long time.

The problem is that her thinking is all mixed up. The logic she uses automatically programs her for failure. She will never break the fear barrier until she is made aware of her faulty thinking; she simply does not "see" what is obvious to those who are out there doing it.

Nor did I until I was forced to. Before my divorce from my first husband, I was rather like a child, allowing him to take over the practicalities of my life. After my divorce, I had no choice but to start doing things on my own. Small things, such as fixing the vacuum cleaner all by myself, brought me enormous satisfaction. The first night I invited people to my home for dinner as a single person was a monumental leap. The day I booked tickets for my first trip without a man was a day for celebration.

As I began to *do* things on my own, I began to taste the deliciousness of an emerging self-confidence. It wasn't all comfortable—in fact, a lot of it was extremely uncomfortable. I felt like a child learning to walk and falling frequently. But with each step I felt a little surer of my ability to handle my life.

As my confidence grew, I kept waiting for the fear to go away. Yet each time I ventured out into a new territory, I felt frightened and unsure of myself. "Well," I told myself, "just keep putting yourself out there."



*Eventually* the fear will go away.” It never did! One day a lightbulb went on in my head as I suddenly realized the following “truth”:

**TRUTH 1**  
**THE FEAR WILL NEVER GO AWAY**  
**AS LONG AS I CONTINUE TO GROW.**

As long as I continued to push out into the world, as long as I continued to stretch my capabilities, as long as I continued to take new risks in making my dreams come true, I was going to experience fear. What a revelation! Like Janet, and so many of you reading this book, I had grown up waiting for the fear to go away before I took any chances. “When I am no longer afraid . . . then!” For most of my life, I had played the WHEN/THEN game. And it never worked.

Once again you are probably not jumping up and down with joy. I am aware that this revelation is not exactly one you wanted to hear. If you are like my students, you were hoping that my words of wisdom would miraculously make your fears go away. I’m sorry to say that it doesn’t work that way. On the other hand, rather than think of it as a disappointment, consider it a relief that you no longer have to work so hard on getting rid of the fear. It isn’t going to go away! Not to worry. As you build your confidence in yourself with the exercises suggested herein, your relationship with fear will dramatically alter.

Not long after discovering Truth 1, I made another important discovery that contributed enormously to my growth:

**TRUTH 2**  
**THE ONLY WAY TO GET RID OF THE FEAR**  
**OF DOING SOMETHING IS TO GO OUT AND DO IT.**

This sounds contradictory to Truth 1, yet it isn’t. Fear of *particular* situations dissolved when I finally confronted them. The “doing it” comes *before* the fear goes away.

I can illustrate this by recounting my first teaching experience when I was studying for my doctorate. I was not much older than my students, and I was teaching a subject in which I had dubious expertise—the psychology of aging. I anticipated the first class period with a tremendous sense of

dread. During the three days prior to the class, my stomach felt like it was on a roller coaster. I had prepared eight hours of work for a one-hour class. I had handwritten enough material for three lectures. None of this took away my fear. When the first day of class finally arrived, I felt like I was being sent to the guillotine. As I stood in front of my students, I could feel my heart pounding and my knees shaking. Somehow I got through that class period—not ecstatically looking forward to the second one the following week.

Thankfully, things were easier the next time. (If not, I might have left teaching permanently!) I started to become familiar with the faces in the classroom and connected some of the names to the faces. The third class was better than the second, as I started to relax and go with the flow of the students. By our sixth session I was actually looking forward to standing in front of my class. The interaction with my students was stimulating and challenging. One day, as I was approaching that once-dreaded classroom, I realized I was no longer afraid. My fear had turned into sweet anticipation.

I had to teach a number of different courses before I was comfortable walking into class without voluminous notes. But there did come a day when all I had in hand was a one-page outline of what I intended to cover that period. I realized how far I had come. I had felt the fear . . . and did it anyway. As a result, I got rid of my fear of teaching. Yet, when I took my teaching into the television arena, once again I experienced fear, until my “doing it” often enough eliminated my fear of appearing on television. So it goes.

Another part of the WHEN/THEN game I used to play had to do with self-esteem. “When I feel better about myself . . . then I’ll do it.” This is another mix-up in the order of reality. I kept thinking that if I could improve my self-image, then the fear would go away and I could start accomplishing things. I didn’t know exactly *how* my self-image was going to improve. Perhaps by my growing older and wiser, or through feedback from other people, or a miracle would make me feel wonderful about myself. I actually bought myself a belt buckle that read I’M TERRIFIC, thinking that through osmosis I’d get the message.

Maybe all those things did help a little. What really made the difference, however, was the sense of accomplishment I felt in pushing through fear and doing things on my own. Finally, this became clear:

**TRUTH C**  
**THE ONLY WAY TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF**  
**IS TO GO OUT . . . AND DO IT.**

The “doing it” comes *before* the feeling better about yourself. When you make something happen, not only does the fear of the situation go away, but also you get a big bonus: you do a lot toward building your self-confidence. It’s fairly predictable, however, that when you’ve finally mastered something and gotten rid of the fear, it will feel so good that you will decide that there is something else out there you want to accomplish, and—guess what! The fear begins again as you prepare to meet a new challenge.

Through all the workshops and seminars I attended in my early stages of dealing with fear, I was relieved to learn something else that made me feel infinitely better about myself:

**TRUTH 4**  
**NOT ONLY AM I GOING TO EXPERIENCE FEAR WHENEVER**  
**I’M ON UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY, BUT SO IS EVERYONE**  
**ELSE.**

I said to myself: “*You mean all those people out there that I’ve been envying because they’re not afraid to move ahead with their lives have really been afraid? Why didn’t somebody tell me!?*” I guess I never asked. I was sure I was the only person out there feeling so inadequate. It was such a relief to realize I was not alone in this. I had the rest of the world to keep me company.

I remember a newspaper article I read years ago about Ed Koch, the seemingly fearless mayor of New York City. The article told how he had to learn a tap-dance routine with the cast of a Broadway show for a publicity event. His teacher reported that the mayor was scared to death. This was hard to believe! A man who had often faced crowds of angry people, who had made many difficult decisions affecting millions of lives, who had put himself before the public in his race to be mayor . . . and he was afraid to learn a simple tap dance!

If one is aware of the Fear Truths, the mayor’s fear will not come as a surprise. Tap dancing was an activity that tested him in a new way, and of course he would be frightened. Once he practiced and mastered the routine,

the fear would go away, and his confidence in himself would be heightened—he could put another feather in his cap, so to speak. That’s simply the way it works—*for all of us*. By virtue of our all being human, we share the same feelings. Fear is no exception.

Many stories similar to Mayor Koch’s appear in newspapers, magazines, and books and on television. Until you are in touch with the Fear Truths, you will hear about and read and see these stories and not notice the underlying principles operating. You may never relate the experiences of others, especially those of celebrities, to your life. You may think they are lucky because they aren’t afraid to put themselves out there. *Not so!* They had to push through a tremendous amount of fear to get where they are today . . . and they are still pushing.

Those who have successfully dealt with fear all their lives seem to have known, consciously or unconsciously, the message in this book: You must feel the fear . . . and do it anyway. A very successful friend of mine, a self-made man who allowed nothing to stop him along the way, pondered the title of my course one day, nodded, and said, “Yes, I guess that is the way I’ve always lived my life, without consciously realizing that’s what I’ve been doing. I can’t remember not being afraid, but it never occurred to me that fear would prevent me from taking the risks necessary to get what I wanted. I just went ahead and did what I had to do to make my ideas work—despite the fear.”

If you have not been successful in dealing with fear, you probably never learned the Fear Truths, and interpreted fear as a signal to retreat rather than as a green light to move ahead. You have tended to play those WHEN/THEN games I mentioned earlier. All you have to do to find a way out of your self-imposed prison is to retrain your thinking.

A first step in retraining your thinking is to say the Fear Truths at least ten times a day for the next month. As you will shortly discover, retraining faulty thinking takes constant repetition. *Knowing* the Fear Truths is not enough. You have to keep feeding them to yourself until they become a part of your being—until you start to reverse your behavior and move *toward* your desired goals, rather than retreating. There will be more later about why repetition is important. For now, just trust me and repeat the Fear Truths over and over again.

Before you begin, however, I'd like to add one very important Fear Truth to the list. You might already have been asking yourself, "Why should I put myself through all the discomfort that comes with taking risks? Why don't I just go on living my life the way I've been living it?" You might find my answer to that question surprising. It is:

**TRUTH 5**  
**PUSHING THROUGH FEAR IS LESS FRIGHTENING THAN**  
**LIVING WITH THE UNDERLYING FEAR THAT COMES**  
**FROM A FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS.**

Read it again. I know it's hard to take in at first. It says that no matter how "secure" any of us feel in the little cocoon we have built for ourselves, we live, consciously or unconsciously, with the fear that the day of reckoning will eventually come.

The more helpless we feel, the more severe is the undercurrent of dread that comes with knowing there are situations in life over which we have no control—such as the death of a spouse or the loss of a job. We find ourselves becoming obsessive about possible catastrophes. "What if . . . ?" Fear permeates our lives. That is the irony of Fear Truth 5: people who refuse to take risks live with a feeling of dread that is far more severe than what they would feel if they took the risks necessary to make them less helpless—only they don't know it!

I can illustrate with the case of Janice, a middle-aged housewife, who "planned" her life in such a way as to avoid risk taking as much as possible. She married a successful businessman who handled both their lives. Janice allowed this situation because it was more comfortable for her never to put herself on the line. But, as the saying goes, "Life is what happens when we've made other plans!" At the age of fifty-three, her husband, Dick, had a stroke, which left him partially disabled. One day she was totally *taken* care of and the next she was totally *taking* care of.

The transition wasn't easy. After fighting the rage of "Why did this happen to me?" she started to accept the fact that she was now in charge of both her own and her husband's survival. Numbed, she went through the motions of learning his business, handling decisions regarding his health, and waking up every morning with the understanding that it was now up to her. After a while, the numbness left, the fog cleared, and she discovered a

profound sense of peace she had never experienced before. She started to realize the heavy price she had paid to be taken care of.

Prior to her husband's stroke, Janice's thinking had been permeated with the phrase "what if?" She always worried about the future, never enjoying her todays. She had lived with the underlying dread, "My God, what if something happened to him?" She had often remarked to her friends, "I hope I die before he does. I couldn't live without him." And she thought she couldn't—which is a less-than-satisfactory way to go through life. This all changed as she found strength she never thought she had. She now knows the answer to her question "what if?" The answer is: "I'll handle it!"

Janice had never realized she was living with terror all her life until that terror disappeared. The new fears were nothing compared to her old fears about survival. Her husband has now recovered enough for them to live a satisfying life together. He, too, has faced one of his biggest fears—that of becoming disabled. He got the answer to his question "what if?" which was also "I'll handle it." They both handled it beautifully. In fact, through this experience they learned the real meaning of love.

By now you've gotten the picture. We can't escape fear. We can only transform it into a companion that accompanies us in all our exciting adventures; it is not an anchor holding us transfixed in one spot. Some people have told me they are never afraid, but when I question them, they reveal that we are just differing on semantics. Yes, they feel nervous or anxious some-times—they simply never labeled it fear.

As far as I know, everyone feels fear as he or she moves forward through life. It is absolutely possible that there are some evolved souls in this world who never experience fear, but I have not met them. If I do, I promise I will become their avid student and report back to you with their secrets. You see, I "know" on some deep level there is nothing to fear. It's the surface level that needs convincing. In the meantime I've learned to "feel the fear . . . and do it anyway!" As I do, whether I feel the fear or not becomes irrelevant. My life will work in either case . . . as will yours.

### **Five Truths about Fear**

1. The fear will never go away as long as I continue to grow.

2. The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out and do it.
3. The only way to feel better about myself is to go out . . . and do it.
4. Not only am I going to experience fear whenever I'm on unfamiliar territory, so is everyone else.
5. Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness.

# 3

FROM PAIN TO POWER



g! I am powerful and I am loving! I am powerful and I am loving! I am powe  
m lovina! I am powerful and I am lovina! I am powerful and I am lovina! I a

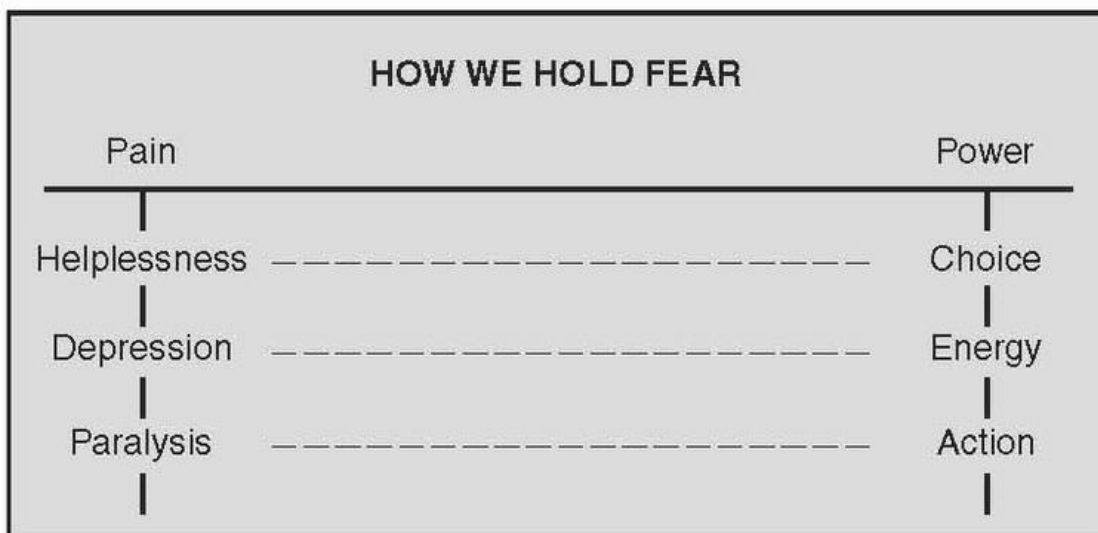
**T**he last chapter revealed a critical insight indeed, and that is:

IF EVERYBODY FEELS FEAR WHEN APPROACHING  
SOMETHING TOTALLY NEW IN LIFE,  
YET SO MANY ARE OUT THERE “DOING IT”  
DESPITE THE FEAR,  
THEN WE MUST CONCLUDE THAT  
*FEAR IS NOT THE PROBLEM.*

Obviously, the real issue has nothing to do with the fear itself, but, rather, how we *hold* the fear. For some, the fear is totally irrelevant. For others, it creates a state of paralysis. The former hold their fear from a position of power (choice, energy, and action), and the latter hold it from a position of pain (helplessness, depression, and paralysis).

The chart on the next page illustrates this concept.

From this it can be seen that the secret in handling fear is to move yourself from a position of pain to a position of power. The fact that you have the fear then becomes irrelevant.



Let's talk about the word "power." Some people say that they do not like the concept of power and want no part of it. It is true that in our world

the word “power” has some negative overtones. It often implies control over others, and, unfortunately, is often misused.

The kind of power I am talking about is entirely different. In fact, it makes you *less* manipulative of those around you, and certainly more loving. I am talking about *power within the self*. This means power over your perceptions of the world, power over how you react to situations in your life, power to do what is necessary for your own self-growth, power to create joy and satisfaction in your life, power to act, and power to love.

This kind of power has nothing to do with anyone else. It is not egomania, but a healthy self-love. In fact, egomaniacs have absolutely no feeling of power—thus their compelling need to control those around them. Their lack of power leaves them in a perpetual state of fear, since their survival depends on the outside world. No one is more unloving than a person who can’t own his or her own power. Such people spend their lives trying to pull it out of everyone else. Their need creates all sorts of manipulative behavior.

The kind of power I’m talking about leaves you free, since you don’t expect the rest of the world to fill you up. It’s not the ability to get someone else to do what you want them to do. It’s the ability to get yourself to do what you want to do. If you do not own this kind of power, you lose your sense of peace. You are in a very vulnerable place.

I have found that women are more put off than men are by the concept of power, for obvious reasons. Men have been conditioned to believe that to be powerful is good. Women have been conditioned to believe that to be powerful is unfeminine and unattractive. It is my experience that nothing could be further from the truth.

A self-assured woman who is in control of her life draws like a magnet. She is so filled with positive energy that people want to be around her. Yet it is only when she has become powerful within herself that she can become authentic and loving to those around her. *The truth is that love and power go together*. With power, one can really begin to open the heart. With no power, love is distorted.

For the women reading this book, a good antidote to any inner conflict between power and femininity is to repeat to yourself at least twenty-five times each morning, noon, and night:

**I AM POWERFUL AND I AM LOVED.**

And:

**I AM POMERFUL AND I AM LOVING.**

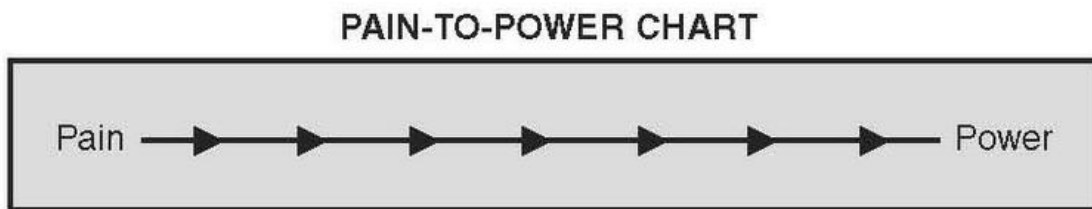
An energizing variation is:

**I AM POMERFUL AND I LOVE IT!**

Say these three statements aloud right now. Feel the energy the words convey. Their constant repetition will help make the concepts of power and love more compatible and certainly more comfortable.

Now that I've explained the kind of power I'm talking about, let's explore how to use the Pain-to-Power concept in daily life.

The first step is to create a Pain-to-Power Chart, as follows:



As we look at the Pain-to-Power continuum, most of us can place ourselves somewhere in the middle of the chart. We're not totally incapacitated by our fears, but we're not exactly feeling a great sense of power and excitement, nor are we quickly sprinting to our goals. We seem to be taking the arduous route over the mountain carrying two suitcases and a watermelon rather than flying on the wings of eagles. As another ancient sage once said, "The pathway is smooth. Why do you throw rocks before you?"

Using the Pain-to-Power Chart as a frame of reference, you can begin to clear the rocks in front of you. The following steps will help in the clearing process:

1. Draw an enlargement of the Pain-to-Power Chart and place it on your wall. Just the simple act of making the enlargement will make you feel a little more powerful. You are already taking action! Remember that much of the trick of moving from pain to power is taking action. **ACTION IS VERY POWERFUL!** Once the chart is on your wall it will serve as a constant

reminder of where you want to go in life—from pain to power. *Awareness* is half the battle. Having the chart physically present will also help you motivate yourself to keep moving in the right direction.

2. Just to keep you from taking yourself too seriously, you might want to write somewhere on your chart “Angels fly because they take themselves lightly.” I heard this quote by Gilbert K. Chesterton a long time ago, and it still makes me smile. It constantly reminds me that you can drop an awful lot of excess baggage if you learn to play with life instead of fight it.

3. Put a pin at the place on the chart where you see yourself situated at this moment in your life. Are you in the middle, where you sometimes feel depressed and paralyzed and at other times feel more in control? Or do you definitely find yourself on the far left side, where there is little you are able to do to pull yourself out of the rut? Or perhaps you are already on the right side, where most of the time you feel you are really moving ahead with your life, with only a few areas that need to be worked on. I doubt that anyone reading this book has reached their goal of attaining absolute power over the self. Even the Buddhas have their days! There are always new experiences that challenge a sense of personal power.

4. Each day look at the chart and ask yourself, “Do I see myself at the same place, or have I moved?” Move the pin accordingly.

5. If you keep in mind the direction you want to go, it will help you make decisions about what you are doing in your life. Before you take any action in life, ask yourself: “Is this action moving me to a more powerful place?” If it isn’t, you will think twice about doing it. *A word of caution:* If you go ahead anyway, knowing the action will keep you in a position of pain, don’t get angry with yourself about it. Just notice where you are not taking responsibility. The next time, you can make a different decision. Use your “mistakes” as learning experiences. Remember that each time you get angry at yourself for an action you have taken, you keep yourself on the side of pain.

6. Make your use of the chart fun. Having it as a game keeps you light about the situation. If you have children, they can create their own charts, and you can make a family game out of the experience of growing.

7. You might want to make different charts for different areas of your life. To be really powerful, you need to be in charge of all aspects of your life—your work, relationships, environment, body, and so on. Often people are very powerful in some parts of their lives and pathetic in others. For example, I am very powerful in terms of my career, but need to work on the area of exercise.

Note that your movement on the chart is determined only by your own intuitive sense of how far you are progressing in gaining more power in your life. No one else can judge that, though they may try. Although your life may look exactly the same to the outside world, it is your own sense of internal peace and growth that determines where you are on the chart. It is, totally, a feeling within.

You may wonder if you really need to go to such lengths to get yourself moving. Trust me—you do! In the beginning, you need all the gimmicks you can get to remind you of where you want to go. You don't become powerful without concentrating on power. As you must have figured out by now, simply knowing what to do does not mean that you do it, or, for that matter, even remember it.

To help you on your pain-to-power path, it's important that you begin to develop a Pain-to-Power Vocabulary. The way you use words has a tremendous impact on the quality of your life. Certain words are destructive; others are empowering. Choose to move to a Pain-to-Power Vocabulary as follows:

## PAIN-TO-POWER VOCABULARY

Pain		Power
I can't	-----	I won't
I should	-----	I could
It's not my fault	-----	I'm totally responsible
It's a problem	-----	It's an opportunity
I'm never satisfied	-----	I want to learn and grow
Life's a struggle	-----	Life's an adventure
I hope	-----	I know
If only	-----	Next time
What will I do?	-----	I know I can handle it
It's terrible	-----	It's a learning experience

“I can’t” implies you have no control over your life, whereas “*I won’t*” puts a situation in the realm of choice. From this moment on, strike “I can’t” from your vocabulary. When you give your subconscious the message “I can’t,” your subconscious really believes you and registers on its computer: WEAK . . . WEAK . . . WEAK. Your subconscious believes only what it hears, not what is true. You might be saying “I can’t” simply to get out of a dinner invitation—such as, “I can’t come to dinner tonight. I have to prepare for tomorrow’s meeting,” but your subconscious is registering, “He’s weak!” In fact, “I can’t come to dinner” is an untruth. The truth is “I *can* come to dinner, but I *am choosing* to do something that has a higher priority at the moment.” But the subconscious can’t discern the difference and is still registering “weak.”

Although you may want to be more delicate to your host than to utter the above statement, you can still stay away from the words “I can’t.” “I’d love to come to dinner, but I have a meeting tomorrow that’s important to me. I’ll feel better walking in totally prepared. So I’ll pass for tonight and hope you’ll invite me again.” That statement has truth, integrity, and power.

The subconscious hears you stating your priorities with clarity and choosing the outcome that serves your own growth. Choosing this way doesn't leave you the helpless victim of your meeting.

"I should" is another loser. It, too, implies that you have no choices in life. "*I could*" is more powerful. "I could visit my mother, but I'm choosing to go to the movies today." This puts things in the realm of choice instead of obligation. "I can visit my mother or I can go to the movies. I think I'll choose my mother today." "Shoulds" bring on guilt and upset—totally draining emotions. Your power is taken away every time you utter the words "I should."

"It's not my fault" is another beauty. Once again, you look helpless. It's better to take responsibility for whatever happens to you in life than to always be the victim. "It's not my fault I got sick"; "It's not my fault I lost the job." If you are willing to take responsibility, then you might see what you can change in the future. Relative to illness, say, "*I'm totally responsible* for my illness. Let's see what I can do to prevent it from happening again. I can change my diet. I can reduce stress. I can stop smoking. I can get enough sleep." And so on. Watch how powerful you become! The same occurs with the lost job. If you are responsible, you can be better prepared the next time; you can find out what made the difference. You are in control. Each time you find yourself in better control of your life you are moving to a position of power, which will ultimately reduce your fear level.

"It's a problem" is another deadening phrase. It's heavy and negative. "*It's an opportunity*" opens the door to growth. Each time you can see the gift in life's obstacles, you can handle difficult situations in a rewarding way. Each time you have the opportunity to stretch your capacity to handle the world, the more powerful you become.

"I hope" is another victim's phrase. "*I know*" has far more power.

I hope I will get a job.  
I know I will get a job.

What a difference! The first sets you up for worry and sleepless nights. The second has peace and calm about it.

"If only" is boring. You can hear the whine behind it. "*Next time*" implies that you have learned from the situation and will put the learning to

use another time. For example, “If only I hadn’t said that to Tom” can be restated, “I’ve learned Tom is sensitive about this issue. Next time, *I’ll* be more sensitive.”

“What will I do?” Again you can hear the whine and the fear implied in these words. You, like everyone else, have incredible sources of power within that you haven’t used before. It would serve you to say to yourself, “*I know I’ll handle it. I have nothing to worry about.*” Instead of, “I’ve lost my job! What will I do?” try “I’ve lost my job. I know I’ll handle it.”

“It’s terrible” is bandied around in the most inappropriate circumstances. For example, “I lost my wallet. Isn’t that terrible?” What’s so terrible about losing a wallet? It’s certainly an inconvenience; it’s hardly terrible. “I gained two pounds. Isn’t that terrible?” It’s hardly terrible to gain two pounds. Yet that’s the way we talk about trivia in our lives. And our subconscious is registering, DISASTER . . . DISASTER . . . DISASTER. Replace “it’s terrible” with “*It’s a learning experience.*”

While you might feel more justified in saying “It’s terrible” if a loved one has cancer, keep in mind that this attitude takes away your power to deal with the situation. There are many who have learned important things from the experience. I know, because I am one of those people.

My experience of cancer taught me many wonderful things about myself and the people around me. Most important, I learned how much I was loved. I saw a tender side of my fiancé, now my husband, that I had never seen before, and our love deepened immeasurably. We stopped taking each other for granted. Also, I have changed my life in many positive ways. I’ve become a much more aware eater. I’ve learned how to eliminate the anger, resentment, and stress that was very much a part of my daily life prior to my illness. My cancer experience has given my husband and me an opportunity to contribute something to this world. I wrote a very positive article about my mastectomy, which I know has been of value to many men and women. My husband and I have appeared on television together to relate our experience, bringing reassurance to viewers. So you see, cancer *can* be a great learning experience and an opportunity to give.

You get the picture. Begin eliminating the terribles, can’ts, problems, struggles, and so on from your vocabulary. Maybe these semantic differences seem trivial, but I assure you, they are not. Not only does your sense of yourself change with a more powerful vocabulary, so also does your presence in the world. People who display an inner strength are treated



differently from those who come across as weak. The more powerfully you speak, the more you will be a force in the world around you.

As you begin to monitor your vocabulary, you can also bring more power into your life by *expanding your comfort zone*. What does that mean?

Most of us operate within a zone that feels right, outside of which we are uncomfortable. For example, we might spend \$75 dollars for a pair of shoes, but \$100 would make us nervous. We might be willing to initiate friendships with people at the office who are at our level in the company, but would be uncomfortable doing so with one of the higher-ups. We might go to the local deli when eating alone, but would feel really uncomfortable in a luxurious restaurant all by ourselves. We might ask for a \$5,000 raise, but \$7,000 would make us cringe. We may charge \$30 an hour for our services, but we don't feel that we are worth \$35. And so on.

For each one of us that zone of comfort is different, but whether we are aware of it or not, all of us—rich or poor, low or high on the totem pole, male or female—make decisions based on the confines of that comfortable space.

I suggest that each day you do something that widens that space for you. Call someone you are intimidated to call, buy a pair of shoes that costs more than you would have ever paid in the past, ask for something you want that you have been too frightened to ask for before. Take a risk a day—one small or bold stroke that will make you feel great once you've done it. Even if it doesn't work out the way you wanted it to, at least you've tried. You didn't sit back . . . powerless. Watch what starts to happen when you expand your comfort zone:

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