



Banishing Fear

by Rob McKelvey

Both fear and anxiety, although different, can be debilitating. If I was to ask you "Have you ever been afraid or felt anxious?" and you were honest in your response, the answer would be YES. And if I asked you if fear or anxiety has stopped you from doing something that you wanted to, or needed to, I am sure the answer would also be yes.

It may be useful to get a definition of the two. Fear is related to the specific behaviors of escape and avoidance, whereas anxiety is the result of threats which are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable. Having said that, it can be difficult to actually determine whether you are suffering fear or anxiety. After all the same physical things happen to you in fear and anxiety; rapid heart rate, increased blood pressure, dilation of the pupils, sweating palms. You just have a feeling that something bad could happen. And most of these bad things are thoughts that you have before anything actually happens. So for purposes of this article lets just call it all fear.

"Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed"

Michael Pritchard

So how can we banish fear. Below are what I hope will be useful tips for helping you banish, or least address, your fears.

1. The most effective way is to confront your fear. Confronting your fear, and embracing it, helps to minimize it. Fighting it makes the fear stronger. Ask yourself what it is that you are really afraid of in the situation. Then ask what is the probability of your fear actually and rationally happening. The more you address your fear the less it becomes.
2. Change your mindset. Since most fears are created by thoughts that you have, change the way you are thinking. Rather than dwell on the negatives that might happen look at the positives. As you come up with positive outcomes the negatives start to disappear. If you for some reason can't think of any positives then minimize the negative thoughts by determining, in reality not in imagination, what the chance of the negative thought happening is.

3. Use positive self talk. This is similar to affirmations in that you can disable the negative thoughts, and the negative voices in your head affirming the fear, with positive talk to help negate the fear. Reaffirm your control of the fear with statements such as:

"I can get through this."

"I can handle whatever comes my way."

"I can feel my heart rate slowing down."

"I am safe right now."

"This feeling will pass."

Use whatever positive talk will be helpful to you.

4. Use relaxation techniques. These include deep slow breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. And as you exhale say the word relax. Focusing on each tense muscle and consciously relaxing it to induce a calm feeling. Meditation either by listening to a meditation tape or by focusing on your breathing technique. Shake the fear out by physically shaking your body and telling the fear to get out. (sounds crazy but it actually works)

Remember that most fears are imagined and if you can imagine the negative you can also imagine the positive. As Mark Twain said:

***"I am an old man who has experienced many bad things.
Most of which never happened."***

Confront your fears. Be courageous and change your mindset. Do some of those things you have been putting off because of fear.