

YOUR WORKBOOK

(FEAR)

Survive first and then thrive



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DISCLAIMER

"Your Workbook" (Fear) is based on my life journey and experiences and is not provided as a scientific text but as a storybook with lessons that can be very useful in anyone else's journey. It is intended to present ideas that excite and incite your imagination as a work of art that would allow anyone to develop their life skills.

My goal is to provide mentorship and this book is not a substitute for medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment or counselling.

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FOREWORD

If I had to fill a swimming pool with a bucket I could debate the fairness of it or realize my options:

- 1) Whine about it
- 2) Shut up and fill the swimming pool with a bucket
- 3) Fill the swimming pool with a bucket while I whine about it

My adaptation to Canadian life involved choosing option 3. Although it is important to fight unfair situations, it is more important for me to do so in a manner that allows me to survive and then thrive.

Many times, I found myself unable to fully grasp or understand what was going on in my new environment, I remember sometimes feeling completely overwhelmed, angry, frustrated or just giving up. What I discuss in "My Handbook" influenced my life. Looking back I can see that I did not lack desire, drive or ability but the right tactics.

I adapted because I had to and not always because I wanted to. It was necessary to do this if I wanted to **survive first and then thrive**. I learned that what I had to do always took precedence over what I wanted to do and I became skilled at understanding what was relevant and what was important.

I grew up in an African culture that exposed me to the art of story telling as a form of therapy and the use of proverbs and analogies to illustrate and stimulate the imagination. I have used this as an effective tactic in my medical practice. I was often surprised by how unfamiliar my "North American" patients were with this method, but very gratified by how quickly they responded to it. The feedback from these many patients, friends and strangers whom I have shared these experiences with convinced me that a book like this is worth writing.

PROLOGUE

WINNERS & LOSERS

I am told that there are about forty million to one billion sperm cells in every ejaculation, each one of those guys hoping to be the one that wins the favour of a little egg, sitting at the end of what can only be described as a precarious journey, through a very hostile birth canal, designed to separate the strong sperm from the weak. Only less than a hundred make it to the end and then the timing had to be just perfect because fertilization is never guaranteed.

You have been taking care of yourself since you were a 2 celled organism, something told you to leave the fallopian tube and start to implant in the uterus, the same mechanism had you start to replicate cells and create the complex structure you now inhabit. Your very ability to survive and make survival decisions definitely pre-dated your brain.

Possibly 50% of pregnancies are lost with the mother never knowing she was pregnant. The trimesters (every 3 months of pregnancy) all present their unique challenges, each of which you manage to scale some before you even had a brain. With every breath, with every metabolism cycle, you fought to be here realizing that the only thing guaranteed without much effort is death.

Everywhere you turned there was always something trying to kill, you even your mother's immune system could turn against you if you made the mistake of getting close and yet like a cellular ninja you negotiated your way through this battle of survival.

You spent nine months in an aquatic environment, instinctively drawing food from your maternal source before you even had awareness of self. You accomplished one of many critical events by successfully transitioning from an aquatic environment and taking

your first breath at birth. All these amazing things, accomplished without your awareness of any thoughts or conscious sense of your existence.

You negotiate your way through the early hours, mostly blind and deaf and yet you instinctively know to reach for the nourishment of your mother's milk. While in the womb, you have developed unique systems designed to help you survive the rocky road on the outside.

There are so many things out of your control, like what environment you end up in, whether you are surrounded by factors that will enhance your survival and yet you do not focus on this, but simply focus on surviving the next sixty seconds to the next minute, the next sixty minutes to the next hour, the next twenty four hours to the next day, the next seven days to the next week and the next fifty two weeks to the next year and as you maintain your focus you continue to grow, you continue to adapt and you continue to learn. You continue to live and to survive.

You had survived some of the biggest threats to your very existence long before you even knew you were here, all around you, at every stage, countless perils on your way. The lottery of life is the biggest lottery you ever played, with the odds constantly stacked against you and your unique abilities constantly making lemonade out of lemons and finding a way to hang around.

You stand before me now, you have a brain and conscious awareness of what you have always been unconsciously aware of, that nothing was ever guaranteed but death, you call yourself a loser and tell me that you are helpless. Look around you my friend for in this moment and every moment that exists for you, does so because you won.

So my winning loser who continues to win even though you perceive you lose, continue to enjoy the gifts you are giving to yourself, because your sense of losing, is your fruit of winning, but remember all the eggs and sperm cells that didn't make it here.

FEAR

Be fearful but don't be ruled by fear. Take time to properly define danger, harm or risk otherwise your cautious nature or instinct will work against you and prevent you from experiencing some of the most beautiful things that life has to offer.

Fear is a very unpleasant or disturbing feeling caused by the presence or imminence of danger. Fear is an early warning system that alerts you of possible danger and the need to take action. So when properly utilized it is the best friend you have but when not it can be your worst enemy.

Fear is the price of being human, and it is normal to be frightened when you encounter something unfamiliar or unsettling. Fear is a spectrum of emotions that ranges from being mildly uneasy and apprehensive to intense overpowering feeling of terror. It is important to remember that fear is a mental state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort, then accompanied by physiological changes that are recognizable. It may occur in contrast to reason or even when there is no apparent reason for it. In other words we don't ask to be fearful, it happens as a response to real or imagined danger, conscious or unconscious.

It is okay to be afraid, in fact you would be an idiot not to be afraid considering the fact that being alive means you are always in imminent danger. It is not fear that handicaps us it is what we do with the fear.

The more you try to understand fear the more entangled your imagination is with fear producing the opposite effect of what you want (to be less fearful).

If you try to conquer it by denying its existence or doing daredevil things to convince yourself that you are not afraid it is time consuming and potentially dangerous.

As an adolescent and young adult I suffered from crippling panic attacks that simply appeared out of nowhere and stayed with me. I found that by detailing and reviewing my experience it made the next attack somewhat familiar and not as scary.

There are two types of fear that I experience and I have called them "Productive fear" and "Unproductive fear".

Productive fear is one of my best friends and is created when I "process" my fear properly, it reminds me of my mortality and allows me to continuously monitor my environment and make survival decisions some of which I do unconsciously without even being aware until much later.

Unproductive fear however occurs when I do not process my fear and it overwhelms me decreasing my ability to make appropriate decisions.

The important steps in processing fear and making it productive are:

- 1) **Recognition:** become aware of the psychological and physiological effects of fear and recognize them when they occur
- 2) **Acceptance:** do not spend energy trying to understand fear or trying to control it but simply accept the fact that you are afraid and move on to action.
- 3) **Action:** allow your imagination to engage in non fearful imagery and in this manner create the actions that move you in the direction of the results that you want.

So rather than focus on trying to be less fearful (and have your imagination engaged in fear), focus on what you have to do get the results you want. Note that taking action with fear is different from trying to control it. Being with fear is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength. By recognizing how fearful you are and being comfortable

with it makes you less vulnerable to fear mongers and people who profit from fear. Not trying to control it brings about a realization that there are a lot of things that you have no control over and so focus on where you have control. Trying to understand or control fear would often result in the imagination being focused on it with the development of "unproductive fear".

Points to remember:

Fear is an important early detection system

By properly processing fear you create a "productive fear" that has significant survival value

Processing fear to make it productive involves:

- 1) Recognition: Being aware of the psychological and physiological effects of my fear and recognizing them when they occur
- 2) Acceptance: Not spending energy trying to understand it or try to control it but simply accept the fact that I am afraid and move on to action.
- 3) Action: Allow my imagination to engage a manner that creates the actions that move me in the direction of the results I want even though I still remain fearful.

Trying to understand or control fear can often be counter-productive when quick action response is required.

DAILY EXERCISE

EVERYDAY

IN EVERY WAY

GETTING BETTER

AND BETTER

MORE CAPABLE

MORE ABLE

Repeat the above phrase aloud (quietly) 10 (ten) times (one after the other) = 1 (one) set

Do 1 (one) set every hour for 10 (ten) hours - 10 (ten) sets a day

Record the time whenever you do a set

Keep a daily journal of anything you consider important that happened on that day.

QUESTIONS

WHY DO WE EXPERIENCE FEAR?

WHAT TYPES OF FEAR HAVE I IDENTIFIED?

WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT STEPS IN PROCESSING
FEAR AND MAKING IT PRODUCTIVE?

ANSWERS