

WORKING WITH FEAR

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Living in the world we encounter fear: fear for our physical, emotional and financial safety, fear of death and disease and losses of health and relationships, and fear of change and of cultural and racial differences. Additionally, fear, like anxiety, has either a signal function, which we might argue keeps us safe or orients us to the dangers of life's landscape (seeing a green light turn yellow as we approach an intersection signals us to prepare for an imminent change). Or it becomes the "thing itself" the danger, which could overwhelm or imprison us. In addition to the above distinctions, fear corresponds to multiple domains of experience: the physical, neurological, philosophical and psychological.

Neuroscientists suggest that fear operates in the brain at a primitive level and the human brain has an instrumental response to threat. Some psychologists have noted that we have had 3.9 billion years of evolution and have had a nervous system for 500 million years. The Polyvagal Theory, pertaining to the role of the vagus nerve in emotional regulation, social connection and fear response, postulates that the vagus nerve directs the fear signal to fight/flight/freeze or collapse response.

There are also physiological responses that assess danger at a subconscious level, which is the part of the brain known as the amygdala located deep within the temporal lobes of the brain. Eckhart Tolle from *A New Earth* says, "The underlying emotion that governs all the activity of the ego is fear. The fear of being nobody. The fear of non-existence, the fear of death." Some people express being terrified of not feeling seen or attuned to. Relationships in themselves may be terrifying for some, intimacy can be scary. Interestingly, the Tibetan Teacher, in *Discipleship in the New Age*, p.78, expresses that "...through the emphasis laid in Raja Yoga on the physical body and its wise control the [student] realizes the essential importance of the physical, and the uselessness of all his knowledge apart from a physical body whereby he can express himself and serve the race."

Philosophically, in the perspective of the Ageless Wisdom, we are counseled that the origination of fear was implanted, in the days of Atlantis, by the dark forces, specifically the fear of death. The Tibetan in *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 732, explains "The fear of death is one of the great abnormalities or distortions of divine truth for which the Lords of Cosmic Evil are responsible. In early Atlantean times these lords of cosmic evil emerged from the place where they had been confined, and forced temporarily the retirement of the Great White Lodge to subjective levels, their first great act of distortion was to implant in human beings fear, beginning with the fear of death. From that time on, men [and women] have laid the emphasis upon death and not life, and have been ridden by fear all their days."

From a psychological perspective fear usually enters the therapeutic treatment space through issues that link with our fears: fears of survival, safety and loss. Paul

Chek, an expert in kinesiology and holistic wellness noised the question, “do you actively avoid or ignore fear and allow it to define you? Fear is a creature that can poison even the best of us.” Often a patient responds to a situation without awareness that fear is guiding or informing that response. A couple I’ve worked with had difficulty communicating their fears and frustrations, therefore lived in mutual silence that built into resentment. When they understood that the silence represented their fears of abandonment, needs to be nurtured, loved and accepted, the silence dissolved and communicating those fears was their liberation.

There are many coping strategies for working with fear. Some therapies are utilizing “Exposure Therapy” where the “brakes are off” concerning facing one’s fears, as in the existential reality that we will die, bad things will happen, and that we have no control if our loved one’s get sick and die. Introspection, as a coping strategy, has been useful in eliciting: character strengths, curiosity, what you want to be remembered for, deconstruction of fear, and fear as a bodily response. I have found that shame underlies fear in many instances especially intergenerational shame, and have seen that in uncovering and facing and working through that which is feared (in this case feeling shame) that fear disintegrates. In working with a young Black man who had an uncontrollable fear of driving (due to believing that he would be killed by the police/a point of truth in that belief) he discovered the shame of his “blackness” and the impact of the intergenerational trauma of slavery. Once he was able to approach the previously unnamed and unwitnessed context, and experience the shame as the thing to be feared, then the fear reaction left him, allowing him to return to driving. This also fostered self-compassion, which is another form of introspection, as well as self-love and universal love towards the elimination of fear. These strategies may exile the fear of the traumas.

Clinical psychotherapeutic work has revealed, to my mind, that the emotions are quite different from feelings. We may get trapped in negative or positive emotions: emotional ecstasy, emotional euphoria, emotional over sensitivity, emotional rage, emotional slights, and clearly emotional fear. We can see this in our own internal battles, as well as worldwide and in this time of CoVid when long held conservative beliefs clash with the fear that progressive, and perhaps more inclusive, change will threaten the “order or nature” of things in life, hence triggering fear responses which repel receptivity and openness to the possibilities that come with change. Edmund Burke wrote in the 18th century, “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.” This fear response then becomes one of the greatest impediments to Soul consciousness, and these emotions lie in the solar plexus, whereas feelings such as love, joy, sadness, frustrations and justifiable anger, come from the heart center.

Exploration and integration of discoveries, which utilize and synthesize the relationship of the body, mind and Soul suggest that we are creating a model of the process of evolution, progressing towards our higher nature. As a society, culture, and civilization, we are collectively lifting from the solar plexus to the heart center, which I see as thinking in the heart, and transmuting emotions such as desire into

love, all of which is creating a huge upheaval. This model begins with integration of the lower threefold human being: physical, emotional/or astral, and mental bodies as an integrated personality, then becoming soul infused, which takes the effort and control of a clear mind and a cool, calm emotional body, then with the aid of Will/Purpose, on towards the Spirit or Spiritual Triad: atma, buddhi, manas, as the truism "as above so below" reveals. The release of fear becomes immanent, through this transformation. We see the mind's capacity for change, revealing the reality where there is no place for fear. Whatever our greatest fears are, the Light of the Soul removes them. Yet it captivates the heart center and begins to release the prison of the astral realm where the true antidote to fear, love and joy, may be expressed.

Using the imagination with the "as if" technique of soul infusion and the steady, persistent, disciplined method of soul alignment, we contact higher consciousness by the means of meditation. Study is also an aspect of service where we discipline and focus the mind to higher thinking, and then through service, as we think of others and how we can serve, we loosen the hold of fear and we have a channel through which our emotions are transformed. This is a critical time of keeping the mind steady in the light. Emotions or the astral nature, pull us into symbolic darkness, which is materialism, greed, and separation. Soul contact informs us of the true nature of humanity, that we are all One humanity, and therefore right human relations becomes the only way relationships can sustain themselves. How can we then behave in any other way than through the use of right speech, self-forgetfulness, loving action, and harmlessness?

Union through identification with the whole (the group), by aligning the different aspects of the personality, soul and Spirit, becomes a true Synthetic Psychology. The pain, suffering and hate that we see in the world today, is evoking the cry of humanity, a cry which calls to service those whose soul nature is responsive to this human struggle.