

fearless

A portrait of Alex Gibney, a middle-aged man with a goatee and glasses, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a solid blue-grey color.

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Build
your fear
toolbox

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Feel
pain to
its core

“You must have
enough confidence
in yourself to know
you’ll get there...”

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MAKE IT HAPPEN

“You just have to trust the process.”

Alex Gibney is an Oscar and Emmy-winning director and producer. His work includes “Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room,” “Jimi Hendrix and the Blues,” “The Human Behavior Experiments” and the Academy Award-winning “Taxi to the Dark Side,” about a taxi driver in Afghanistan who was tortured and killed at Bagram Air Base in 2002. Gibney is president of **Jigsaw Productions** an independent production company producing films, music documentaries and TV miniseries.

HYPOTHETICAL HORRIBLES IN AFGHANISTAN

I’VE HAD MOMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN WHERE BOMBS EXPLODED VERY NEAR MY HOUSE, AND ONCE A JOURNALIST WAS KILLED BY SOMEONE WEARING CHEST EXPLOSIVES AT A SPOT I HAD BEEN JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE. SO THERE’S NO QUESTION



that I felt fear, but in those times, you can't really overcome that fear; you just take precautions and be sensible. You realize that anything can happen, and all you can do is be cautious. That calms you down, to some extent.

In those moments, there's nothing to do but focus on details. Instead of being frozen by hypothetical horrors, you focus on the immediate details in front of you: "How should I best accomplish this task? How can I find what I'm looking for? Who can I ask? Who might speak English?" By focusing on the details, I found that my broader, more general fear dissipated slowly.

A PARENT'S WORST FEAR

I'm usually thinking more about my family than I am about myself in those moments, and although I'm concerned for my safety, I certainly felt a responsibility for them. It's much tougher to take those kinds of risks when people are depending on you.

The most devastating fear for me is to look into the future and imagine that you don't have the ability to take care of your children. It may not sound like the fear one experiences when facing a firing squad, but when you look at small kids and you're not making any money, and your prospects look dim, and you don't know if they'll be able to go to a



“These thoughts racked me with fear for many years and were the worst moments of my life. I wasn't able to sleep, it was so consuming.”

good school and you don't know if you can keep a roof over their heads, it's a terrifying thought. These thoughts racked me with fear for many years and were the worst moments of my life. I wasn't able to sleep, it was so consuming.

NO NEED TO PANIC

I was overcome by anxiety early in my career during the editing process, thinking that I wouldn't

find the story or structure. It overwhelmed me to the point where I felt paralyzed, unable to move forward. I was thrashing about in a desperate state, always trying to find a way to the issue of the film. But in a documentary, you're trying to discover the story through the material, so essentially you're writing the script at the end of the process rather than at the beginning. Inevitably, you go through a process where you just don't know what the story is, you're not certain how it will turn out. You just have to trust the process and visualize a moment in the not-so-distant future when you know you're getting to

the end, and you know the end will be good.

You have to have enough confidence in yourself to know that you'll get there somehow. That realization allows you to find the story more quickly, because you're not crippled by anxiety and you know that it's OK not to know. It's a little like being in a fog. You know sooner or later the fog will lift, so there's no need for you to panic.

IMAGINE YOURSELF SUCCEEDING

You're not sure how you're going to get there, and you don't know the path to reach the end, but by being confident or fooling yourself into a confidence that you'll get there, it allows you to go forward. If you visualize failure in the forefront of your mind, you're done. You somehow have to imagine yourself succeeding, which allows you to then move onto a path of success. If you're lost in the woods and you panic, you get yourself into a much worse situation than if you do something rationally with the hope that things will turn out OK. Sometimes you can actually take some comfort from admitting that things are not good at the moment but that they will get better, and you focus on making them so.

Getting lost in the woods is a lot



like making a documentary film. You have a lot of trees, a lot of material, but you don't know how to see any order in that material or how to see your way out of the forest. As a young man, I was flailing around saying, "Oh my God, we don't know what the structure is! This is terrible!" Sometimes I would impose a structure, to the film's detriment. It got me to a semi-finish line, but it wasn't the best thing to

FEAR IS THE PRICE OF AMBITION

Fear of failure and competition are still very much a driving force in my career. I recently read a book on sociobiology that changed my thinking about fear called "The Moral Animal" by Robert Wright. He talks about how anxiety can

“It overwhelmed me to the point where I felt paralyzed, unable to move forward.”

do. Allowing yourself time to find just the right story is crucial. It takes some time to discern that, but you have to be confident that you'll be able to get there.

be a rather useful mechanism for survival. If everyone was on Zoloft all the time, they'd never try to get out of the woods if they were lost. They'd be fine where they are because, why did it matter? They wouldn't have any ambition,



because they wouldn't have fear of failure as a motivator. Fear still motivates me – I imagine releasing a film and everyone walking out saying, "What a joke." The worst thing is if people yawn and think, "Man, this is boring." Just because I'm at a certain level in my career doesn't mean the fear has disappeared. But if it weren't there, I don't think I could push myself to do the work.

CHECK YOURSELF

When I see new filmmakers who have a lot of fear, I tell them to focus on the essence of their story, to find one they think will stand the test of time and to investigate how to make it happen. They need to check themselves upfront to make sure it's a story that they feel in their gut, and if it is, then to pursue it as aggres-

sively and completely as possible.

When you're done, you need to envision that you'll be judged by other people. You don't want to spend too much time thinking about what others think, but you need to be aware of it. At the same time, use yourself as a gauge. "Would I be interested in this? Would I walk into a theater to watch this?" It helps to imagine yourself as the audience of your film.


I don't think the films I make are that great a risk. Yes, sometimes I make films about powerful people, but it's hard to imagine that powerful people would notice me, or if they did, that they would take me out. When I go to a dangerous place, that does occasionally give me pause, but I don't really focus on the risk that much; I focus on the interest of the story.

And usually, I'm interested in

stories where I think some fundamental wrong has been committed. That kind of pisses you off and makes you want to do something about it. I'm telling that story. I'm not worrying too much about "Is Dick Cheney going to be angry with me?"




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MENTAL KARATE™

WALK INTO FEAR

“If anything, fear makes me work harder.”

Jacqueline Novogratz

is the founder and CEO of **Acumen Fund** a nonprofit venture fund that uses entrepreneurial approaches to redefine solutions to poverty. Acumen Fund finances entrepreneurs who bring affordable clean water, housing and health care to the poor. Prior to Acumen Fund, Jacqueline directed The Philanthropy Workshop at the Rockefeller Foundation and founded Duterimbere, a microfinance institution in Rwanda. Her book “The Blue Sweater” tells stories of a new philanthropy, emphasizing bottom-up solutions over traditional top-down aid.

A LOT OF ARMS TO CATCH YOU

I NEVER FELT TOO MUCH FEAR, EVEN AS A LITTLE KID. MY MOTHER TELLS A STORY ABOUT WHEN I WAS 6 AND HOW I REALLY WANTED TO WALK TO SCHOOL, BECAUSE THE NUNS CLEANED THE SACRISTY IN THE MORNING, AND IT WAS ABOUT A MILE AWAY FROM OUR HOUSE. TO GET THERE...



I had to leave at 6:30 a.m. in the dark, and she thought it was a terrible idea but saw that there was no stopping me. On the first day, she literally drove behind me slowly as I walked! She said, “You’re going to get yourself killed!” The next day, I did it by myself.

“Part of the blessing of having a big family is that if you fall down, there are a lot of arms to catch you.”

Despite this, I would get really anxious about being the last kid on the swim team. And sometimes I was the worst kid on the swim team, but I just did it anyway. What put things into perspective was after a race, when I realized I survived and felt much the same afterward as before. I was lucky because I had parents that said, “You can’t be good at everything.” Part of the blessing of having a big family is that if you fall down, there are a lot of arms to catch you.

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GIVE LOVE TO THEM

Another aspect of being in a big family is big expectations. As the eldest child, you always want to get good grades and just be good – the biggest fear is failing at something.

As a young person, the thing I was most scared of was public speaking. The first time I had to talk to a big group of people, I was absolutely terrified. I used to practice my speeches 20 times if it was a big one, and I’d be up half the night working on it. Now I don’t practice at all unless it’s really high stakes! But the more I did it, the more I felt comfortable with it. It took a lot of years and a lot of practice.

I just looked at it and thought, “It’s not about you. It’s about giving a message to those people out there. Your job is to go out there and be an instrument and give love to this audience.” I talked myself into it, and then I’d go and do it. It’s not that the fear isn’t there; it’s a commitment to looking at the fear and walking through it.

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ANYTHING BUT MEDIOCRITY

To me, mediocrity was always a much bigger fear than falling down and having to pick yourself back up. It felt much worse.

When I first started Acumen, someone said to me, “Tell me about your fear of failing.” I said, “I don’t have a fear of failing.” He said, “Just visualize it for me.” I said, “I can’t visualize it for you, it’s ridiculous. I’m not going to fail.” He got so frustrated with me, because he thought I wasn’t looking internally enough, but I reflected on that later, that perhaps that’s the nature of being an entrepreneur – you can’t visualize failure, only success.

“To me, mediocrity was always a much bigger fear than falling down and having to pick yourself back up.”

In Africa, there was a great deal of uncertainty, and I wasn’t quite sure what my work’s role was initially. I questioned, “Should I be here? Am I doing the right thing? Am I good enough for this?” But again, maybe it’s entrepreneurship, maybe it’s leadership, maybe it’s just getting things done in the world. You look at that fear, and you just kind of walk into it. You don’t let it paralyze you.



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KEEPING YOURSELF IN CHECK

One of the fears of being successful is that perhaps you’ll lose your humility. Another is that you’ll move too far away from the people that you’re ultimately serving and then be less effective. A third fear, which absolutely needs to be confronted, is that you’ll pay the price of losing some of your closest social relationships, that you won’t be there enough for family and friends, because you’re so focused on the mission that you’re trying to accomplish.

Even if those work out, it’s still possible you won’t be good enough, that you won’t even know if you’re successful or if you’re really changing the world

for anybody in a way that really matters. And if you are good enough, the world starts paying a lot of attention to you, so you have to somehow balance the confidence in going after what you need to accomplish with the humility of knowing you’re a long way from getting there.

I feel these fears every day. If anything, it makes me work harder. At some level, if I didn’t have those fears, then I’d hope that one of my friends would slap me.

“One of the fears of being successful is that perhaps you’ll lose your humility.”

They’re motivating, containing fears. The fear that will check you and your ego, check you and your desires.

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LIMITLESS POTENTIAL

Even as a young person, I’ve always believed that people are capable of extraordinary things. Human beings really do have unlimited potential, I have no doubt about that. I believed in starting Acumen from the thought that bridging charity and the marketplace could solve big problems and that the world would recognize more and more how interconnected we are.

THE BLANK SHEET OF PAPER

“There isn’t much to be afraid of besides failure.”

Michael Paterson

is Executive Creative Director at Ogilvy and Mather in New York. After graduating from Oxford, Michael started his career as an account executive working on Motorola, helping create the “Moto” campaign then went on to work with iconic brands such as IBM, American Express, GAP, SAP, Cotton Incorporated, The UN, Lenovo, Ad Council, and most recently Comcast Business, AHIP (America’s Health Insurance)

IMMERSE YOURSELF

FEAR IS A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER. IT’S HARD TO FACE THE QUESTION, “WHERE DO YOU START?” AS A CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL. YOU ADDRESS THAT BY MAKING SURE YOU’RE ARMED WITH ALL THE RESOURCES YOU CAN POSSIBLY HAVE. THAT MEANS BEING SWAMPED IN ART AND CULTURE, AND REALLY BEING KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT WHAT’S GOING ON.



That at least ensures that you're equipped when you need to be, so that you can solve the large creative problems and things spring to mind immediately when you confront the blank sheet of paper. By educating yourself and immersing yourself in it, you diminish that fear. The imposing blank sheet of paper becomes an amazing canvas to create something original on. It's still the scariest thing, but also the biggest opportunity.

The biggest fear as a creative professional is, "How good is my next idea going to be?" I'm faced with that fear every day, and as a creative person, the buck stops with you. You can't turn to anybody else to solve the problems for you, you're the end of the chain, and you have to solve them yourself. People come to you because they want you to solve the problem, and that happens every day, and you've got to handle it.

FROM DARKNESS TO SUNLIGHT

Before this job I was doing something entirely different, so I know the difference between being a creative professional and being stuck in a job you're not sure is right for you. I've always been creative, even as a kid, always had an interest in art and photogra-

phy and fashion, but my previous job was a business management job where my creative side wasn't engaged at all, and I became very frustrated. I began debating whether to switch careers. I was thinking, "I should do this, but I don't know if I can, or how." That was the most fearful time for me, but I asked myself "What's the alternative?" I had no



rationale for staying in business, so confronting my fear was the only option.

The transition when I gave it all up was a very exciting moment of flowering in my life. Really, it was like the sun coming out after a huge long period of darkness. I thought to myself, "You only live once," and to me it meant, "Why not actually live?"

I don't think people really understand that, they forget what that means. Sure, you might take a risk, but there's always a risk involved no matter what you do. Sure, you might have to change, and change is something I think a lot of people fear, but in my experience, change has always been a good thing. It's always provided new avenues and opportunities, things you've never even thought of. Of course there's always the chance things could go wrong. But isn't it better to take that risk? Or is it better to look back at the end of it and say, "I wish I'd taken that risk." The risk of staying stagnant is much worse than the risk of exploring opportunity, even though it's scary. If I hadn't changed and made that transition in my life, I would be in a much worse place right now.

UNCERTAINTY, MEET OPPORTUNITY

These uncertain times are a huge opportunity for people. There are a lot of people who don't like what they do who can now choose to reevaluate how they spend their time. People will speak to me and ask, "What do you do?" When I say I'm an art director, I can't tell you how many times they've responded, "Oh, that sounds like fun. What's it like?" And I tell them how I love getting up in the morning and can't wait to come to work, which doesn't even feel

like work, it just feels like my life. It's what I do. So many times people say, "I have a job, but I really don't enjoy what I do." So lots of people obviously don't like where they're at. The troubles on Wall Street might be a blessing in disguise because maybe our lives won't be so driven by money anymore. There's much more to life than money, but in the past 20 years, money has been such a huge driver.

FAILURE: GIVE IT A GO

There really isn't much to be afraid of besides failure, and what is failure anyway? If you try something and it doesn't work, is that really a failure? If you cause a problem for somebody else or you harm someone, that's different. But I always have in the back of my mind, "Well, at least nobody died, it's not that big a

deal." That's what I say to myself. Try it. Go for it. Give it a go. The worst anyone can say is "No." And for every no there is a yes.

The creative industry is extremely competitive, and competition is a very healthy inspiration for success. It inspires people to do well, to do their best, to stay current. And failure's not a bad thing. I'd say most of the things I've worked on failed in one respect or another. But I'm still proud of them because they've taught me something. I don't see the time I spent before I became an art director as a negative thing. If I hadn't done that, I don't think I would have the drive or enjoyment for what I do now. That experience of not doing what I loved makes this time that much more valuable. I look at everything from that perspective, that you've got to go one step at a time and learn from each experience.

REMAINING A GENERATOR

As you progressively become more successful, the downside is that you move away from being the person who actually creates the work and comes up with the idea to someone more in the role of enlisting and inspiring other people to come up with ideas. You begin to move away from the reason you got into it in the first place. That's why you have to remain you. You have to continue doing and thinking creatively. You must actually generate ideas as well as develop them in others, because if you lose that connection to the blank sheet of paper, you cease to become a creative person. The best creative people are the ones who continue to do those two things as they become more successful. I couldn't wake up and get to work every day if I didn't have that motivating me. The reason I come in is the ability to create something.



FOLLOW YOUR HEART

“You must keep utilizing what works for *you*.”

At the age of 24, **Tom Kelly** entered the Self-Realization Fellowship monastic order, taking vows of simplicity, chastity, and obedience. There, he spent the next 25 years as a monk steeped in meditation and humanitarian service. In 1999, Tom left the monastic life to expand his training and share his self-transformation with others. He founded the **Soul Center** in Encinitas, California, where he brings **Raja Yoga** to the community through classes, spiritual coaching and meditation. Tom is an inspirational speaker who travels worldwide to teach the transformative power of yoga.

BEFORE I WENT INTO THE ASHRAM I WAS IN COLLEGE, TAKING ALL THE RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL CLASSES I COULD. I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING IN MY LIFE THAT I HAD TO UNDERSTAND - AND IN COLLEGE THE KNOWLEDGE WAS JUST PUMPING IN FROM THE INSIDE-OUT - I DIDN'T FEEL IT WAS RIGHT FOR ME. I REALIZED THAT I WANTED TO TRY TO LEAD THE LIFE OF A MONASTIC...



to become a monk. My whole spiritual life, I've followed my heart, not my head. In college. I realized that instead I wanted to learn the life of a monastic and had my heart set on a particular ashram. After a long year of waiting on the wait list, I followed my heart into the ashram and was very excited about going in. The day I arrived, I was over the moon because I knew this was my life's purpose, and I couldn't believe I was actually in. After waiting for so long, it was wonderful.

“My whole spiritual life, I've followed my heart, not my head.”

The second day, however, my head started to get in the way. I started to question: “Is this really right for me? This is really serious. What have I just done? There's no turning back from here.” I knew that this way of life was something you couldn't just do half-way – that it was going to be very demanding for me personally. So I started to doubt my decision. I doubted all day and the strife kept building and building all day long and even into the night, to the point where I couldn't sleep that night because my heart was eclipsed by so much fear. I had so much fear in my mind about whether I'd be able to live this life, whether I was disciplined

enough, whether I was too worldly of a person, whether I'd miss all the things of the world if I lived in the ashram. By the time the third

day rolled around, I had already decided I was leaving – my things were packed.

“I had so much fear in my mind about whether I'd be able to live this life...”



That same afternoon on the third day, the head monk called me in

“I didn't know from one day to the next how I was going to make it through.”

for a meeting. I still hadn't met him yet since getting in, and the first thing he said to me when he saw me was, “Why are you thinking of leaving?” I was shocked, because I had never met him and I hadn't told anyone about my plan, so I thought, “This guy's a mind reader!” So I asked him if he was.

“It's written all over your face,” he said. Then he explained to me logically that it didn't make sense to wait so long to come into the ashram and then leave after two days. “Why don't you just give us one year here and see if you're not happier at the end of the year,” he said. It sounded logical, and being so young and scared, I didn't have a rational argument, so I said, “I'll give it one year.” Now, that still didn't take any of the doubts or pain away, and the fears didn't go away, but it did help me to at least commit for one year. Only now do I realize that it was part of what I needed to go through early in my life – to face my fears head on – and I had

no other recourse but to pray and meditate deeply.

THE DOORS CLOSED BEHIND ME

When I came into the ashram, the biggest fear in my mind was the fear of living in the strict environment and of leaving my family, and it wasn't until the doors actually closed behind me that the stuff hit the fan. All of my old tendencies that I'd tried to shed before the ashram returned with a vengeance and it felt like the few years of spiritual work I'd done before didn't make any difference at all.

Nothing made sense to me. Nothing. It was so hard to live with the decision I made, and it felt like life or death – just plain survival. I didn't know from one day to the next how I was going to make it through. All I relied on was guts and faith, the things that got me in there. I actually cried a lot of tears that first year.

I think God wanted me inside the door, with 15 other people, in a very intense environment, because he knew I wouldn't be able to leave even though I really wanted to. The only way is to just follow your heart, regardless of what your head, your habits, or the world, say to you. That's how you'll be victorious. You have to have “counter-intelligence,” and counter the things that seem like

reality. You have to create a new way of looking at your thoughts and be super imaginative and creative about what works for you to stay close to peace and out of fear. It sure won't be easy, but nothing of value is ever achieved easily.

“I don't believe we're put in situations that are truly too much for us.”

As soon as you form a lofty intention for something good for your soul, it's no cakewalk, because there's a force in this world that opposes the good, and as soon as we get serious about evolving our consciousness, that force gets more active. But I don't believe we're put in situations that are truly too much for us, even though we think they are. There's a spiritual guidance team behind everything, orchestrating what's going on. They're aware that if we have to go through some bad karma, they'll put us in a situation where we'll face it and become much stronger than what's coming at us.

After my first year I had another meeting with the head monk and he asked, “Well, are you happier?” And I had to say yes. I was happier. Perhaps because of a deeper

“As soon as you form a lofty intention for something good for your soul, it’s no cakewalk.”

commitment to my soul, which had given me clarity and courage to follow my heart in the past, I was able to keep my fears at bay for a little while. I lived that life year after year for 25 years, and as long as I was happier each year, then that way of life was worth it for me.

BALE HAY WHILE THE SUN IS SHINING

I have a lot of tools, sharpened over many years, to recognize fear and to practice things that offset fear almost instantaneously. But that doesn’t mean that it doesn’t come back, and when it does, I use another tool. You have to keep utilizing what you have and what works for you, and once you find them, using them becomes 100 percent the focus. Then you build up a bank account of amazing, wonderful energy,

conscious awareness and skills so that when you face some unexpected darkness or tests, you have so much in reserve to deal with it. Most people have nothing in reserve to deal with fear, and life just takes them down. It’s crisis management for most people. The best way to handle it is to make a lot of spiritual effort in phases when you’re not going through a test or a moment of fear, so that you can prepare yourself for when you do.

“You have to keep utilizing what you have and what works for you.”

You need to have the eye of the tiger and sense the finish line even though it might be lifetimes away. There’s a saying, “Bale hay while the sun is shining,” so when things get rough, there’s no leveling out. There’s no status quo on the spiritual path. You have to have a “go-for-it” attitude, take advantage of every opportunity of good health and every opportunity to meditate, because that’s what abundance is about. It’s the abundance of all those wonderful efforts put in over a long period of time that store up amazing grace when you need it.



I’m talking about doing it right now. Go for it right now, wherever you’re at and whatever you’re doing. There’s no time to waste. The good times are a time to make a lot of spiritual money, store up a lot of good spiritual energy and put it in the bank – the bank of the soul. You’ve got to bank on your soul. It’s the repository, the center of the wealth of the universe. That’s the proactive approach to dealing with fear.

THE OPPOSITE OF FEAR

When the time came that I seriously considered leaving the ashram after 25 years, I went on a month-long retreat. I started having significant fears about leaving the ashram after being there for so long, and I started journaling my fears in a notebook. After nearly filling an entire notebook,

“I looked at each fear, every single one, and wrote the opposite of each one down.”

I thought, “There’s no way I can leave here. I have to stay.” What’s interesting is that even though I felt fear in my heart, I didn’t really think of them as fears at that time; I just thought they were feelings guiding me to stay in the ashram – rational feelings, I thought. Everything I wrote down suggested that it would be a bad move to go out in the world.

Then one morning I looked at each fear, every single one, and wrote the opposite of each one down. After I wrote the first one, I couldn’t believe how all of the sudden my heart felt lighter just by writing it down. I felt that when I wrote the opposite of each fear, it almost reminded me, “Oh, that’s who I am. This fear isn’t who I am, this idea beyond my fear is who I am.” So I proceeded to do every single one like that, the pages upon pages of fears I had written down. By the time I finished the last one, I knew: “It’s absolutely time to leave the Ashram.”

What’s really interesting is that none of those fears that I wrote

down that day have come true since I left. Not one has materialized. It’s only in leaving that I realized that my fears were baseless. All my thoughts of “Would I be able to make it on my own? Would I stay as spiritually intense as I was in the Ashram?” and on and on weren’t even a consideration. The answer was yes. Yes. I’m glad I addressed those fears then, but the bottom line is: Write down the opposite of your fears. You’ll probably realize that that’s who you really are, and then follow that. Then always follow that. Always follow your heart even if it makes absolutely no sense to your head. Follow and trust love. It will take you on a path that you could never dream up in your mind that leads you straight to where you need to go.

LIFE: THE MOVIE

We live on a planet of change, of duality. There’s birth and death, sickness and health, youth and age, sadness and happiness all built into the human condition. We don’t know from one mo-

“We feel fear because it’s our fundamental human right.”

ment to the next if we’re going to be alive or if our loved ones are going to be alive. So we feel fear because it’s our fundamental human right. Add the stresses of modern-day living and economic pressures, and there’s a collective fear that is a major force in our lives. But fear and courage are constructed from the same entity, like different shapes on a

“Fear and courage are constructed from the same entity...”

movie screen formed by a single beam of light. When we realize that we don’t have to live in delusion, we are truly empowered. When you turn inward, toward your soul, you gain a power undaunted by the “reality” of life.

I still feel fear sometimes, but my 35 years of spiritual effort has shown me that fear can be the greatest thing to help turn your attention toward light – a great motivator to change our focus from the illusion of our world to the potential we have within.

I try to keep my focus on that thought every day. As soon as I forget that truth, I’m in fear. As soon as you choose anything but truth, you’re in delusion, and in delusion there’s fear. It’s that clear-cut – there isn’t much gray.



You either choose the positive thought and mitigate the fear, or you choose the negative thought and remain in the darkness of fear. We've all been hypnotized to forget how to do this. It has to be a practice of remembrance – of steady focus. We don't just need reminders every now and then, we need to initiate the willpower to remember all the time. This constant practice is something anyone can do.

STATE OF GRACE

We should recognize that there's a divine orchestration behind our

lives. Sometimes we're so overwhelmed by challenges and difficulties that we don't realize that everything is still divvied up by God. We're only given as much as we can handle to grow but never enough to smash us. I believe that our trials to come to us in moments when we're able to

“We're only given as much as we can handle to grow but never enough to smash us..”

handle them and grow – to teach us lessons, not to defeat us.

Now, I'm approaching almost 40 years of steady spiritual living, 25 years in the monastery and when I'm in a state of grace, I'm fearless. And I know for a fact that sincere effort brings grace. Grace comes when you are totally, sincerely wanting to know truth, from wanting to be a good person, from wanting to do the right thing. It's all in degrees. So the more that you make steady, daily progress and give daily reminders to yourself, the more fearless and in a state of grace you'll begin to feel.

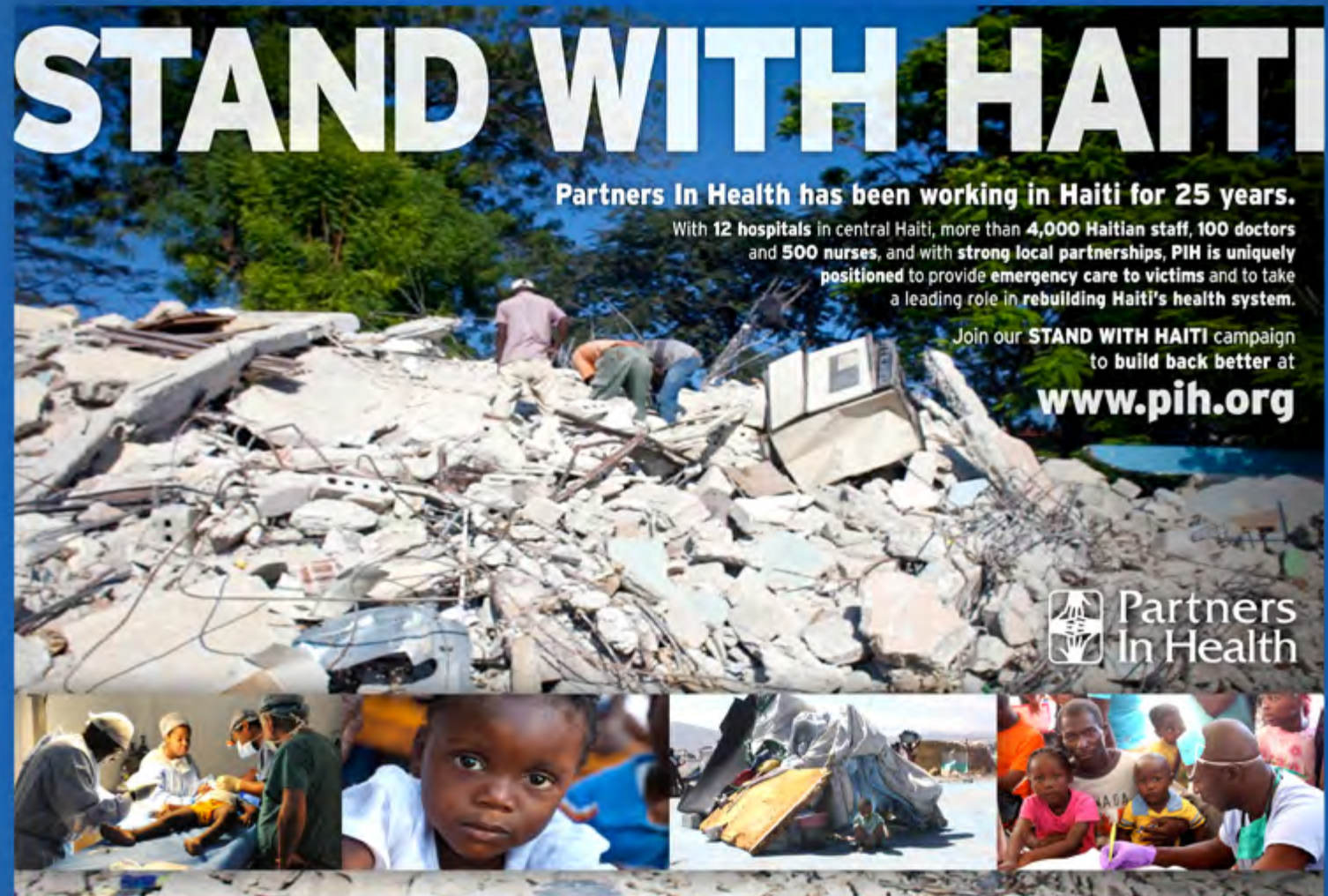
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Partners In Health has been working in Haiti for 25 years.

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RESPONSE ABILITY

THE ROOM FALLS APART

The first 10 seconds after the plane hit our building, the room fell apart. For five or six seconds, the building swayed towards the Hudson River about 6 feet, and then it came back to vertical and stopped. During that oscillation, I was terrified that the building was going to fall over.

After the first plane hit, we weren't sure that it was a hijacking. We knew it was severe, because we could look up next door and see major damage, but we really thought it was an accident or just a one-off situation. But our tower was hit 17 minutes afterward, and then I knew in an instant that it was terrorism.

A FEELING OF CALM

When the building came back to vertical, I felt that I was physically fine and I could think rationally. I could walk about freely, I wasn't trapped, and I had my flashlight with me. I had this feeling – not calmness, but optimism. I had a sense of certainty that I would be OK.

Since the '93 bombing, I had volunteered to be a fire marshal on our floor, so I felt a responsibility to help people evacuate and get to a safe zone. I led a group of seven people down the west hallway to the center core where we began our descent down stairway. The plan was to go to the center, find a stairway and start our descent. It was only three floors down when a woman came up the stairs and stopped us, blocked us from going further. She said,

"We just came off a lower floor, and there was flames and smoke. We've got to go up higher."

SCREAMING FOR HELP

I tried listening to this woman but was interrupted by hearing this banging noise and muffled screaming. I shut my eyes and tried to concentrate on what I was hearing. Turns out it was a stranger screaming for help on floor 81. I left our group to go and help, even though it pulled me out of the group of people I was leading down the stairs. They turned around and went upstairs, doing what they thought was best and listening to that woman, and I was now focused on going to get this stranger. After some probing in the smoky darkness, I found the man



and rescued him where he was trapped. He introduced himself as Stanley.

“I had a sense of certainty that I would be OK.”

When we came back to the stairs, I didn't see any flames that the woman had mentioned, so I went down to investigate with this new friend of mine. Stanley and I picked our way through the debris, through the 81st and past the 78th floors. There were some flames in the wall, but we just kept going. At the 74th floor, all of a sudden, we were in normal conditions. The lights were on, and there was fresh air. There was about an inch of water flowing underfoot from some broken pipes, but once we got to the 74th, I remember thinking, “We're fine. We'll just walk out of here and be OK.”

A CRITICAL DECISION

In retrospect, the dilemma I was trying to understand in that earlier moment was, “Should I listen to the woman or go to help the stranger?” If I were someone else, I wonder if I would have

just thought, “OK, this woman is right. There's got to be flames down there. I'm going to go up.”

That's clearly what my other friends thought when they heard her story, but they didn't make it out. I only heard her talk for 10 seconds as she blocked us from going down the stairs.

If that woman hadn't been there, a lot of stories would be different. I would have led that group down, we would have dug our way through the debris, but Stanley would have been stuck where

“That's how it unfolded in that moment.”

he was and he would have died. It's bizarre to think about.

I went because my grandmother instilled some simple values in me, and I put myself in Stanley's position and knew I would have wanted someone to help me if I really needed help. So in I went.

That's how it unfolded in that moment. My friends didn't make a bad decision; they just made an unfortunate one. They were given information at the time, and they accepted what she was saying. Maybe if I had stayed in that conversation I could have convinced everyone to go down and not up. I don't know.

ANOTHER STORY

I went in on the 81st floor with a co-worker of mine named Ron DiFrancesco. Ron was in my group of six or seven that I was leading down the stairs. It was dark, and there was lots of smoke. We were walking slowly. It took awhile to move a short distance just because it was dark and so full of smoke that we really didn't know where we were going. We were just responding to this stranger's voice. Halfway there, Ron, who was right beside me, was completely overcome by smoke. Stanley, who I hadn't met yet, was screaming, “Help, I'm buried, I can't breathe,” and Ron, who was 2 feet away from me, was just sputtering, completely overwhelmed and gasping for oxygen. But somehow, around me was this bubble of fresh air, like I was in a space helmet or a diver's mask. Ron left me, went back to the stairs and went up. He caught up to the other people who were walking up, while I continued further onto the 81st floor and got Stanley.

Ron actually survived. He went up to the 91st floor, 10 floors higher. That's where he caught up to everybody, and they said they were starting to lie down on the floor thinking they could get fresh air closer to the floor. He said people started falling asleep. That was the phrase he used. They were unconscious.



Ron said he was almost asleep when he heard a voice within him say, “Get up” – almost a spiritual thing. He said he knew that he had to see his wife and children again, so he fought his way back to the stairs through the smoke. The first upper floors weren't obstructed; about 80 or 81 was where the damage started, and Ron picked his way through the debris as Stanley and I had done earlier. He ended up following us down and out of the building.

“Despite my experience, I've been blessed with the ability to fall asleep when my head hits the pillow.”

NO NIGHTMARES, ONE DREAM

Despite my experience, I've been blessed with the ability to fall asleep when my head hits the pillow. I don't have nightmares about that day or anything like that, but I did have one dream of significance. September 11th was a Tuesday, and on the following Monday night, I fell into a dream where I was lying in my bed with

my head off the pillow. To the foot of my bed came José Marrero.

Stanley and I had passed José on the stairs on the 68th floor – he was walking up. He’s the only person that Stanley and I saw in the stairs in our entire decent. We didn’t overtake anybody. Nobody overtook us. There were no firemen or policemen walking up the stairs. We didn’t see anybody with this one exception. I said, “José, where are you going?” He said, “I can hear Dave Vera up above, he’s on the walkie-talkie helping people. I’m going up to help him.” He didn’t come back down.

But a week later, José came to the foot of my bed in my dream. There was no tunnel of light, no flashing lights, nothing like that – just José with this lovely smile that he was known for. I looked at him and I was almost accusatory. I said, “José, you’re alive! How did you do that? You fooled everybody. That’s amazing!” He didn’t respond to me, other than a smile and a nod of the head. He conveyed a message, without him verbalizing it, of “You’ll figure it out.” So, I stared at him for another second or two, and then I shut my eyes and shook my head. In that split second, he disap-

peared. About two seconds later, my alarm went off. And from that moment, I knew that José was fine and my co-workers were fine, and I have had no trouble telling this story.

“it’s natural to question what’s real and what’s possible, but now, I just have absolutely no doubt about life after death.”

NO DOUBT

Any doubts about my faith evaporated after that dream. I was raised a Protestant Christian, and of course it’s natural to question what’s real and what’s possible, but now, I just have absolutely no doubt about life after death and there being a heaven. I’ve always been accused of being an optimist, so it’s kind of natural for me to continue that optimism. It’s not new, but it is reinforced.

RECOVERY

Less than a week after September 11, our company had a meeting where we decided that we would rebuild the company as best we can and financially help the families of our victims. We lost 61 people out of 250 employees in our World Trade Center office.

We were fortunate. Prudential Securities gave us a full floor of one of their office buildings. Dell came in with computers from their warehouse. We got support

from New York Telephone. Our tech staff used the equipment to create a makeshift trading floor.

“the rest of us managed to help each other to recover.”

Two weeks after moving into the temporary office, we had counselors on the floor. We were going to group sessions and individual therapy. Only a few people couldn’t come back to work. For them, it was and remains a great difficulty.

But the rest of us managed to help each other to recover. On any given day, Susie would break down, and five or six people in her immediate area would come to her area and say, “That’s OK, Susie, we’re here together,” and then the next day it would be Harry who would break down, and Susie would now be one of

the ones doing the comforting. So we all went on never knowing when that emotion was going to hit us or who it was going to hit next. And we did it together – much easier than trying to do it alone.

THE AFTERMATH

For the next five years, until his retirement in August 2006, Brian served as president of The Euro Brokers Relief Fund, a public charity that continues to financially support the families of his company’s 61 victims.

Brian currently serves as president of the deacons at The Wyckoff Reformed Church and is on the Board of Trustees at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, where he also chairs the Investment Advisory Council. In addition, he is on the

Board of Governors of Opportunity International (<http://www.opportunity.org>), a global enterprise that provides micro-business loans to the poorest of the poor in 29 developing countries. In 2004, Brian was the recipient of the Norman Vincent Peale Award for Positive Thinking.



Brian Clark was hired in 1973 as the 10th employee of Euro Brokers in Toronto and rose to become their executive vice president one year later when they relocated to New York City. On September 11, 2001, Brian was on the 84th floor of the World Trade Center’s South Tower when the second airplane slammed into the building six floors below him. Brian is one of only four survivors above the planes’ point of impact from either tower.



I was on the bus when I saw smoke pouring out of the buildings, and I just remember seeing this five-story hole. I immediately called the Help Line at work and a man named Calvin Dawson answered. He said he was told it was a small six-man plane that hit the other building. At that point, I was

just in shock, and then thinking that the top of the building could fall over, it was too much. I started screaming at the top of my lungs on this bus that it was no small plane and they should all get out of there. Then we got disconnected. My cell phone no longer worked...

Having been an EMT, I thought I could help and I walked towards the Trade Centers. No one could get too close as it was blocked off. We're standing there, and I remember looking up and seeing smoke coming out of the second building and that another plane had hit, and then all of a sudden, the top of the second tower started to fall, and we started running away, and that's when I really felt fear, when I thought this building was literally going to just collapse on top of me.

None of the other fear in my life came to the extent of this. The ash just overtook us – tumultuous dust and cement and asbestos and burning flesh, and you were inhaling it, not able to breathe. It was pitch black, and you couldn't see your hand in front of you. People were walking the streets, crying, covered in gray toxic ash, everyone was scared to death. I was crawling on the sidewalk, thinking, "Oh, my God, they're going to find my body and tell my mother, 'Your daughter died on the streets of New York.'" So many thoughts go through your mind. It dawned on me I was on a sidewalk in NYC and within feet of me should be a door of a building. I realized I had to get inside and out of the dust for clean air. I heard another person crawling and whimpering and knew we had to get up. I said, "Come with me," to this man next to me, and I was holding this complete stranger's hand, and I'm dragging him with me. We're both nervous, scared, but it helped me to have another person there and to be nurturing, worrying more about him than just me, to just focus on his fear

instead of mine for a minute.

It stopped me worrying about my own life, and I thought, "I've got to help this other person," because he was whimpering and crying. Even though I don't have kids, I went into a protective, nurturing mode, and it took my mind off of my own personal predicament. I felt stronger and somehow, things started making sense in my head. The dust was making it impossible to see so I decided to follow the sound of breaking glass not knowing whether it was an explosion or going to lead to safety. Someone had broken open a window as several doors on nearby buildings that we felt for were locked. We both jumped through.

While on that sidewalk, I remember feeling that I got a little strength from the thought that my grandparents, and my father who had already passed on, were saying to me, "Get up! You can't die on the sidewalk!" Even just the touch of another human being gave me courage to say, "I'm just not ready to die. It's not my time. My life can't be over yet." Something just kicked in.

NOT TRAINED FOR THIS

I remember I had a lot of survivor guilt. I kept thinking, "Why am I alive and they're dead? Why was my friend up there?" It didn't make any sense to me. The

death. The destruction. Losing co-workers, some of them great friends. We were supposed to launch new software that morning, and one of the guys who just had a baby said, "You don't have to come in. My kid gets me up, I'll be here at 7 a.m." On Monday night, I watched the Giants football game to the end. It went really late, so when my alarm went off the next morning and I was rushing to take the earlier bus, I thought, "Oh, others are there anyway. I don't have to rush, I'll sleep in a bit more." So I did that, and that's probably what ended up saving my life.

I don't know if you ever make sense of something like that. Over time, you learn to accept it, but I'm not sure it ever totally goes away. There are days when I'll get emotional and cry and days where I can talk about it like it happened to someone else, but I don't think you're ever really over it. To this day, I have an emotional attachment that I'm not sure will ever go away. I'd say that by the end of August through mid-September, I'm somewhat depressed every year. Last year was the first time I went away during that time to Italy, and on the 11th, I hoped that being away would help, but it didn't. I woke up crying about it and was melancholy the whole day. No matter where you are in the world, this day has a certain meaning, and I think it's just something that I'll live with the rest of my life. It was such emotional turmoil and so tragic. I wasn't trained to be in the front line of war like soldiers are, and even soldiers who go to war, no matter how much

you try to train them, come back traumatized. I don't have anxiety around it, there's just a sadness.

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YOU'RE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND

I've always gotten support from my family and friends, no matter how traumatic the situation, but more than that, I got courage from my own inner strength. There were weeks on end where if I didn't get up and go to work, I lay in bed and cried. But slowly, you get back to real life, and over time, you get stronger. It came from inside myself, and although it took some time, I started to feel like I could overcome, that I could tune in to my own inner strength and that it would get me through.

You're your own best friend, and you're the only person you can rely on 24/7. Even though someone else can talk to you, the truth is, sometimes you just have to go through the things you have to go through. Everyone grieves differently, and you've got to find your own way of getting through it. Personally, and I believe this was true even before 9/11, I really needed to embrace the pain of life and feel it to my

core, like when my grandmother died in my arms. I believe you have to embrace the pain, make love to the pain and that will get you through the pain. I cried ev-

ery night for about a year after my grandmother passed, and finally one morning I awoke realizing I didn't cry last night so I must finally be starting to heal. I still cried for a while but on and off as time passed, it got better.

I embraced my pain, forcing myself to do things and go out, and at some point, it starts picking up little by little. I don't believe in trying to numb that pain. I think that just prolongs the agony. I find the more I really let myself feel it, the better it gets and the less time it takes to get through it. I feel that that's more realistic, not courageous. What's worked for me is to look it straight in the eye and say, "Yes, I'm feeling pain." Lying in bed, wallowing in it and really looking at it directly helped me get over it, although the transition was slow. But then it's two steps forward, one step back the entire way. The first anniversary was the most difficult. It was like I had climbed 12 steps up the healing ladder only to fall back down eleven of them.

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SHARING GRIEF

I created a memorial website, which turned into a memorial book, and I think that hearing other people's grief and talking to them about it was therapeutic, in a way. Sharing grief with people at the company was helpful too, because although everybody's story was so incredibly different, whether you were up-

stairs, downstairs, outside, inside, you ran down the stairs or you ran when the building was falling, it brought us together. To be honest, those are the only people who truly understand how it affected my life that day.

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Karen Preziosi worked as the Vice President of information technology, financial and business software for Maxcor / Euro Brokers Inc., located in 2 World Trade Center. The September 11, 2001, attacks claimed the lives of 61 of the company's employees. Karen volunteered to raise money for relief funds that stemmed from the tragedy and also produced a Euro Brokers memorial website for her lost friends and colleagues, which helped publish a remembrance book for the families and friends on the first anniversary. Now Karen works in the voice brokering division for BGC Partners.

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**I HAVE NO COMPETITION AND NO RIVALS.
EVERYBODY'S GOT THEIR OWN PACE, THEIR OWN
TRIP. I DON'T TRY TO KEEP UP. IF YOU DON'T TRY AND
KEEP UP, YOU JUST SOUND LIKE YOURSELF, WHICH
SHOULD SOUND LIKE THE MOMENT.**

Grace Jones

