

fearless



“You can’t lie to
people about
yourself, because
it shows.”

PLATON 35
masters the art of living

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Your
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Through
The Fear

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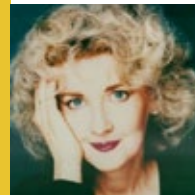
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FEAR.LESS

Founder & Publisher: Ishita Gupta and Clay Hebert

Executive Editor: Matt Atkinson

Copy Editors: Katie Byrne, Emil Lamprecht, Ben Currie, Pooja Lohana

Design: Jason Ramirez and Michael Reyes

Cover Photo: Norman Jean Roy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Generous thanks to our contributors, each of whom took the time to share their story with our readers with honesty, willingness, and wisdom.

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**Fear is not the natural
state of civilized people.**

Aung San Suu Kyi

Open to Possibility

“Many people think fear is the most effective tool for getting results.”

Benjamin Zander

is conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and has been a teacher at the New England Conservatory for more than 40 years. He guest conducts orchestras around the world and has led the New England Conservatory Youth Philharmonic on 15 international tours. Ben speaks about leadership at conferences like the World Economic Forum, TED, and Pop!Tech and has been profiled on “60 Minutes” and the BBC. He is co-author of the best-selling book **“The Art of Possibility”** with psychotherapist Rosamund Zander.

IN TIMES OF SOCIAL UPHEAVAL, FEELINGS OF FEAR CAN BECOME ESPECIALLY ACUTE, AND SO THIS IS A TIME WHEN LEADERS HAVE A CRUCIAL ROLE IN HELPING TO LOWER THE TEMPERATURE OF FEAR IN THOSE AROUND US.



cr: Tony Rinaldo



cr: Korean Keys

Whom am I referring to when I say “leaders”? Of course, I mean all of us. Everybody can choose to step into the leadership role at any moment. An 8-year-old child is given a dog from a shelter. The dog is terrified by its new surroundings: Will it be cared for? Will it be mistreated as it was before? The child has a choice: “Shall I dominate this dog, teach him who is the boss, kick him if he gets in my way and beat him if he misbehaves, or will I offer him unconditional love, guide him firmly when he makes a misstep and praise him when he does

well, so that gradually, over time, he will develop good habits and be my beloved companion for the rest of his life?” That is a choice in leadership, and we human beings are called to make such choices literally every single moment of every single day.

A new employee coming into the office or a child into a new classroom will naturally be afraid that he won’t be accepted, included, good enough, etc. The very first words spoken by the person in the next desk might make all

the difference. Indeed, every time we open our mouths we have an opportunity for leadership.

Of course, many people think fear is the most effective tool for getting results. Classrooms, offices, sports arenas, orchestras, prisons and even marriages are places where bullying, domination and fear often flourish. Certainly fear is sometimes useful. Fear of getting burned will stop a child from putting his hand on the stove and fear of reprisals will usually stop a country from becoming too belligerent.

However, one of the signs of a developing society is that domination, control and aggression are replaced by love, support and encouragement. We are living in a new world! We are coming to realize that things that happen in one country affect others around the globe, so domination, bullying and aggression no longer produce the results people are looking for.

*“It’s always up to us
how the day goes
for the people
around us.”*

Let’s go on the premise that fear is destructive, that an orchestra will play better if the players are not living in terror that if they make a mistake, they might lose their jobs. I’m sure that an orchestra plays best when the players are free of fear and focused on the beauty, passion and expression of the music and the joy of sharing it with the audience. Surely the same must be true of other human endeavors.

So how do we diminish the fear that is so pervasive?

First, create an atmosphere of enthusiasm, joy and love. “I hope it’s a good rehearsal,” I said fearfully,



before an all-important practice. “Well, it’s entirely up to you!” said my prescient personnel manager. It’s always up to us how the day goes for the people around us. The conductor’s job is to remind the players why they went into music in the first place, not to make them wish that they hadn’t!

Second practice: “Rule #6.”

Rule #6: “Don’t take yourself so goddamn seriously,” goes the punch line. And what

are the other rules? There aren’t any.

Do I always remember Rule #6? No, of course not. I often find myself so anxious about the upcoming performance, or so worried that the outcome of any situation won’t be the one I want, that I snap at someone or lash out, but will they play better if I do? No, of course not. Remember the conductor doesn’t make the sounds, the musicians do! So they will probably produce the most beautiful



music if they are pampered, loved, encouraged and appreciated like a racehorse before the big race!

HOW FASCINATING!

Here's another practice:

When players make mistakes, they tend to freeze. Their faces go into lock-jaw, and they close down emotionally, fearful of repeating the mistake. I tell them to raise their hands in the air and say, "How

fascinating!" for it is only when we make a mistake that we get a chance to learn. My teacher used to say, "You can't play great music till your heart has been broken." Ha! Wouldn't it be great if we could embrace every mistake, every breakdown, every broken heart with a joyous "how fascinating!" – an invaluable opportunity to grow and learn.

Fear inhibits the flow of the music. I want the players to be swept up by the excitement, the joy, the passion of the music, like a surfer riding an especially fluent

wave. I encourage them to join me like partners in the enterprise. They are making the sounds, after all. I want them to feel free, passionate, engaged. In order to bring out all that the music calls for, they have to be willing to take risks; otherwise the music will sound constrained and inexpressive.

WHITE SHEETS

I give my players an unusual invitation. I say, "If you disagree with something, I am doing (or saying), or have a suggestion about the music, or see some way that you or the orchestra could be enabled to express the music more fully, write it down on the white sheet that you find on your music stand." I tell them I take every comment to heart, especially the negative ones.

"If you don't like the way I am conducting a passage, or you don't like the tempo, tell me on your white sheet, and I'll make sure my conducting is so clear that you will find it easy, exciting and enlivening to play, and I will find the tempo that makes your solo breathe perfectly." If they know that they will never be reprimanded and demoted for telling the truth, they will play their hearts out when one of their suggestions is heeded. I invariably find their comments enlivening.

GIVING AN A

In my classes at the Conservatory, I actually give every student an A in the first class of the year. Then

I tell them to write a letter dated the following May, describing who they will have become by the time the class ends, to reflect this perfect grade. Then I “teach” the person they have described in the letter! Isn’t that nice for me? I only have A students in my class! I find myself so light and joyous in the classroom. And of course we can do that with everyone we encounter, even the “impossible” people – “You mean I can give my boss, spouse, mother-in-law an A too?” You bet.

“My teacher used to say, “You can’t play great music till your heart has been broken.”

UP TO SOMETHING BIG

“But,” my students say, “What happens if that voice telling you you aren’t any good starts speaking in the middle of a recital?” You turn to that voice and say, “Thank you for sharing. I am busy.” But you have to have something to be busy with, something bigger than just being better than the next person - otherwise the “voice” will have a field day. Sharing the beauty

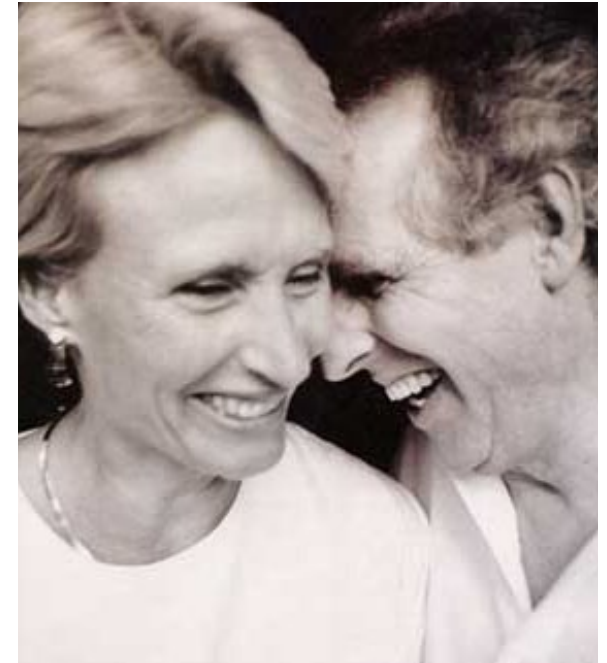
of great music with people, so their hearts are touched and their spirits raise, now that is a task worth doing. If you focus on that, the fear will fall away. And when that happens, eyes will be shining - yours and theirs.

‘THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LOVE’

It was the English philosopher John Ruskin who said that. Of course, it’s not true; it’s a story. But if we could actually get inside that story and live it, miracles of connectedness, expression, inclusiveness and grace would unfold in our lives. Now compare that to “every man for himself.” That’s another story, and along with it goes a whole lot of other outcomes, as different as they could possibly be. Then we say what happens to us is luck, fate, divine intervention or coincidence, missing the whole point that most of the things that happen in our lives unfold out of the story we are living.

Lao Tzu, the Chinese philosopher, said something very beautiful about love. He said: “Because of deep love, we are courageous.”

Imagine a mother whose child is caught in a burning building. Does she hesitate before she rushes in to save him? Of course not! What gets her there? Is it courage? No, it’s love. So I say to my students, when they are feeling fearful, and that voice starts to natter while they are playing, “Don’t look for courage. Look for love.” Love for



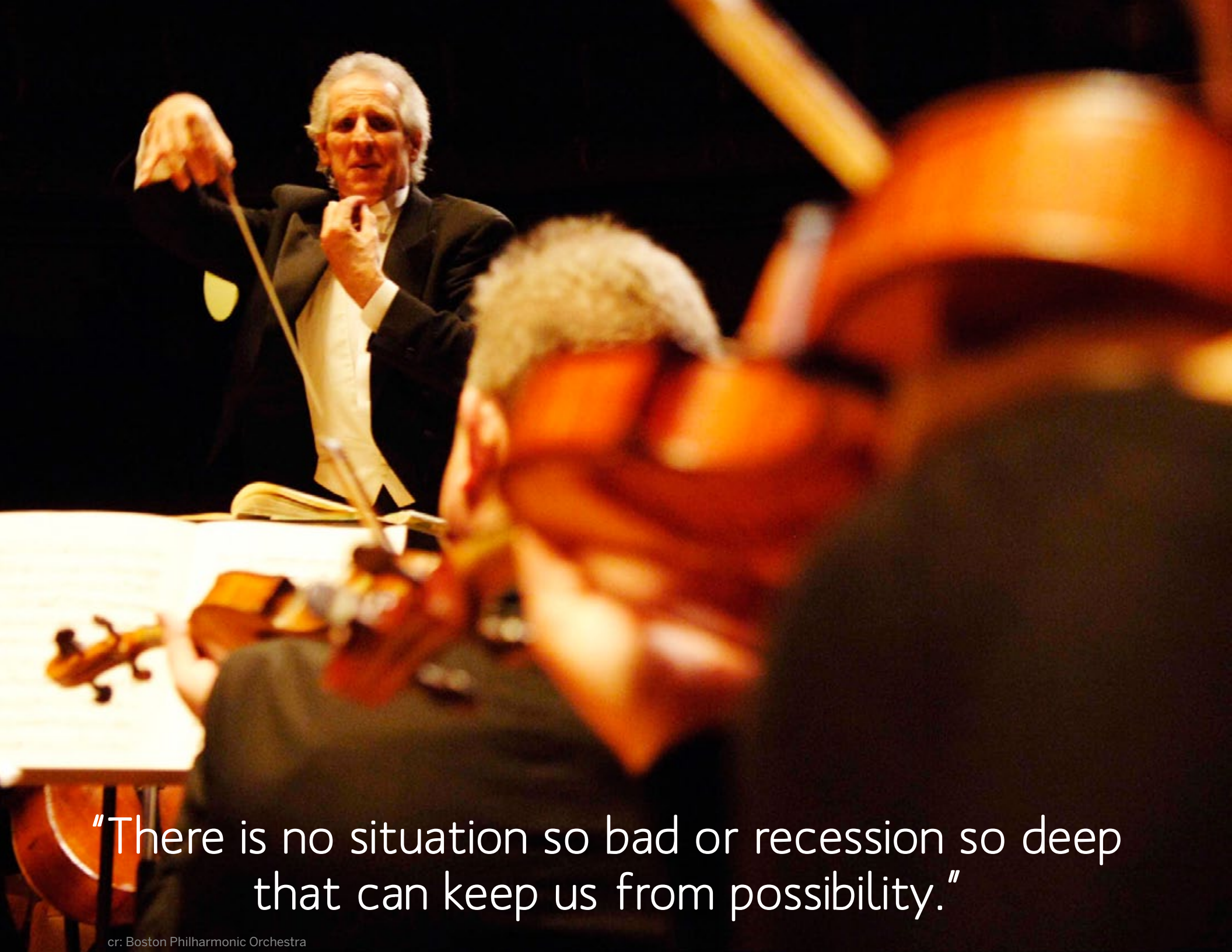
Ben and Roz Zander

the music, love for your capacity to move people, love for the audience who is open to be touched.

TELL A BETTER STORY

All of this comes from the realization that the stories we tell ourselves, or more accurately, the stories we live inside, dictate our behavior and attitudes.

Two shoe salesmen go to Africa to see if they can sell shoes. One sends back a telegram: “SITUATION HOPELESS STOP THEY DON’T WEAR SHOES.” The other sends a telegram: “GLORIOUS



"There is no situation so bad or recession so deep
that can keep us from possibility."

.....

OPPORTUNITY STOP THEY DON'T
HAVE ANY SHOES YET!"

Both telegrams tell a story, and each will dictate the attitude, language and even body language of the person who is living that story. The circumstances are the same in each case. What is different is what we say about it. So perhaps we would do well to spend less time complaining about our circumstances and focus more on what story we are telling ourselves and others about it.

Once we get (and I mean get, at the molecular level) that life unfolds in the stories we tell, then we can rather easily come up with a different story. Of course, the new story has to be plausible and believable, but when it is, amazingly, I would even say miraculously, our mood, our body, our energy, our worldview change as the new story unfolds.

Roz, my partner and my coach, is a psychotherapist. Her genius is her ability to teach people to tell better stories about their lives than they are already telling. If they don't make a breakthrough, she doesn't charge for the session. If you're "selling" transformation, why would you ask people to pay for something they aren't getting? I do the same with my concerts. If you don't have a great experience at the concert, you can come and ask for your money back. Actually, no one has ever asked either of us for their money back. I think that's because we are both passionately committed to transformation



Ben at the [TED](#) conference in California

and never allow the downward spiral of fear and "business as usual" to run us in our work.

POSSIBILITY THINKING

There is no amount of wealth, success or power that can protect us from the downward spiral of fear, competition and "business as usual." So too, there is no situation so bad or recession so deep that can keep us from possibility. Possibility is like a magic kingdom: The key to enter is Rule

#6. The "language" is joy, enthusiasm, buoyancy, energy. The rewards are open-heartedness, creativity, grace, generosity, community and love. The outward manifestation is the shining eyes.

This is a great time for possibility thinking. It takes rigorous discipline to get beyond the old habits and attitudes of the downward spiral that got us into this mess. But the rewards of possibility are priceless and the good news is, as Roz is constantly reminding me, that possibility is always only one sentence away.

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The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of a red brick wall. A white, triangular frame is leaning against the wall, and inside the frame, a string of small, dark lights is visible. The text is overlaid on this image.

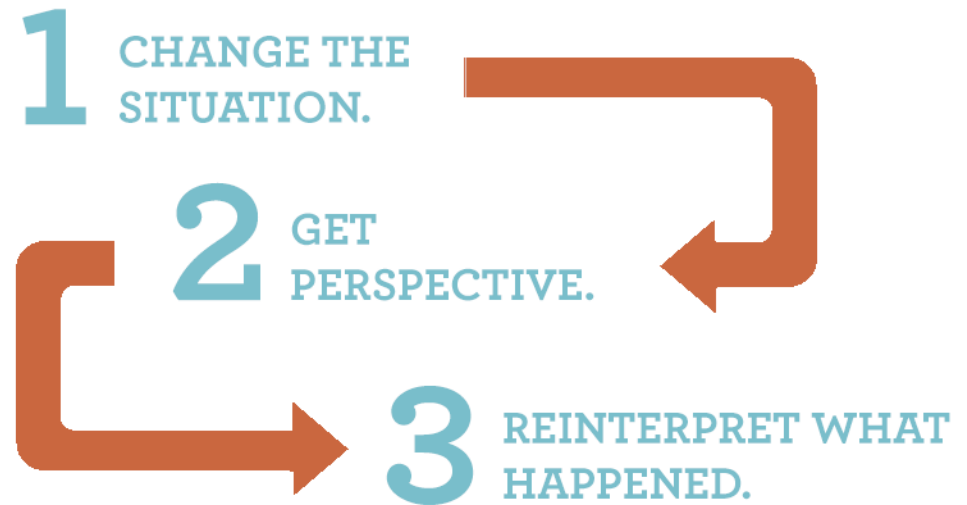
Reframing Fear

Consciously Re-Minding
Your Brain to Become
Fear-less

Suzanne Matthiessen

Fear is one of the most influential forces on the human psyche. It can drive us to irrational thinking and behaviors, and often leads to reactive, compulsive actions that negatively affect our lives. The fear tactic is intentionally used in politics, religion, media, marketing, economics and relationships of all types to shape desired outcomes, and most of the time, it works.

Neuroscience attributes this to our amygdala, the area of the brain that responds to fear, a deeply rooted part of human evolution. When it fires up, our pulse rate and blood pressure increase, muscles tense, and eyes widen as stress hormones flood our entire body, sending into “fight or flight” mode. In this moment, survival is at the forefront of our awareness, and it’s common to feel frozen



in terror when experiencing a fear-generating stimulus. Simply hearing news about a murderer on the loose, encountering a vicious dog, or receiving a threatening call from a bill collector can trigger a fearful reaction that seems impossible to override.

The good news is we can mindfully pattern our brains to remain calm instead of reflexively diving into panic mode. Neuroscientist Kevin Ochsner, director of the Social Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory at Colombia University, has developed a system called Cognitive Reappraisal which trains the brain to reassess a scenario that would ordinarily lead to a negative response to fear-inducing stimuli. “Emotions are malleable,” Dr. Ochsner states, “but

people often don’t realize how much of what we feel is under our own control.”

Dr. Ochsner suggests a three-part approach to training our brains to respond calmly to fearful situations instead of in reactive, harmful ways:

CHANGE THE SITUATION.

Ochsner recommends avoiding people and situations that you already know will trigger a negative emotional response, be it fear or otherwise. This simple (though not always practical) suggestion echoes the understanding that energy is contagious,

regardless of its nature. Humans are empathetic beings, and some of us are more sensitive than others to what we pick up from people.

GET PERSPECTIVE.

If this sort of encounter is unavoidable, step away mentally from the situation to create space in your awareness. Turn the situation into a “movie” in which you are a simple observer with a firmer grasp of reality instead of an emotional insider who creates traumatic assumptions and reactions. Creating psychological distance, Ochsner states, “Has been shown to lessen depression, anxiety and

“Mindful observation produces more rational reactions to all daily situations, in addition to fearful ones.”

negative emotion— both in the moment and when we recollect bad experiences that happened in the past.”

I suggest adding a non-reactive observation of your breathing patterns to this technique during times of heightened stress or fear, simply noticing the intensity of the breath without forcing it to change. This assists in a natural calming that quiets fear and lessens the hormonal reactivity in the body. I strongly recommend practicing this on a regular basis, even in a non-stressful environment, as mindful repetition is imperative in sculpting new neural pathways into the brain. Then, when you do encounter a highly charged situation, your brain will

already be trained to access productive, in-control responses to fear.

Mindful observation produces more rational reactions to all daily situations, in addition to fearful ones. Once we train our minds to not fall into usual patterns of behavior, we won't as easily be tossed about by volatile fear-based emotions. We will become more in control of our instantaneous response to events, regardless of the type, and will automatically remain alert yet relaxed and grounded in our power throughout the day.

REINTERPRET WHAT HAPPENED.

This is perhaps the most valuable step. It's similar to “reframing” — a component of the brain modeling technique called Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder. I often say that nothing means anything unless we decide it does. Our minds decipher the meaning of a given situation by choosing from a limited number of facts and assuming other details from our need to make sense of things. Reframing leaves the facts alone but challenges the assumptions we make about their meaning.

To reframe what your brain determines as a potentially fearful event, step back from what is happening and reinterpret the fear-oriented lens through which this reality is projected. Question and

challenge the beliefs of this scenario. Then choose to create and step into an alternative reference frame and describe what you see. This effectively bypasses the amygdala's annoying pattern of freaking out, and you become open to more positive possibilities. This isn't easy to access in the moment, though. Ochsner states about reframing, “In many ways it is the most difficult strategy for controlling your emotion, but it is also the most powerful. So powerful that it is the backbone of some of the most effective cognitive therapies for treating clinical disorders like depression, panic, and phobia. The key is to find a way to think about what is happening and its consequences that lessens the emotional punch. How you do this depends, of course, on what the threat is.

If you're afraid for the health of a sick loved one, think of what makes them a hearty, strong individual, and that they will likely get better soon. If it's a fear about the poor you health of the stock market, you might also focus on what historically has made it strong, resilient, and able to bounce back, taking the long view that it will return to

“Believing our untrue thoughts is a good way to scare ourselves to death.”

“We can mindfully pattern our brains to remain calm instead of reflexively diving into panic mode...”

health and rise again after a momentary fall. If a police car is behind you, red lights blazing, signaling you to pull over, consider that he may intend simply to give you a warning instead of giving you a ticket or arresting you, so your amygdala's chemical reactions don't make you seem guilty as soon as you roll the window down, increasing the odds that your self-fulfilling worst-case scenario will occur.

Teacher Byron Katie says, “Fear is always the result of an unquestioned past imagined as a future.” She suggests looking at our life situations like an investigative journalist, “Impersonalizing our stories gives us an opportunity to look at circumstances more objectively and determine our responses to what life brings,” says Katie. “Believing our untrue thoughts is a good way to scare ourselves to death.”

Living mindfully means paying attention to the impact of our thoughts, choices, behaviors and actions on ourselves and others. We must work deliberately and bravely, making a conscious effort to consistently remind ourselves how to deal with fear. Then our ability to lead by courageous – and contagious - example in facing fearful scenarios will begin to permanently wire more evolved mental programs into our brains.

Fear teaches fear; so become brave and take a heroic step in teaching your brain fear-less-ness.

*For over three decades, **Suzanne Matthiessen** has successfully employed self-directed neuroplasticity, mindfulness practices, and mind/body wellness tools to help individuals and teams strengthen attention, shape positive choices, and build empathy and interconnection. She specializes in bringing mindful strategies to human communication challenges, and coaches on mindful stress, anger, and pain management.*



Faith Is The Answer

“For those who believe, all things are possible”

Immaculée Ilibagiza’s

life was transformed dramatically during the Rwandan genocide when she and seven other women spent 91 days huddled inside the bathroom of a local pastor’s house, as killers lurked outside. Immaculée entered the bathroom a vibrant, 115-pound student with a loving family and emerged weighing 65 pounds to find her entire family murdered. Finding new faith in God, Immaculée now writes and speaks full time, and her book, **“Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust,”** is a best seller. She runs **Left to Tell Charitable Fund,** which supports children orphaned by the genocide.

Q WHILE YOU WERE IN HIDING, WHAT DID YOU ACTIVELY DO ABOUT YOUR FEAR, KNOWING THAT KILLERS WERE OUTSIDE?

A I THOUGHT ABOUT THIS IN CHURCH TODAY, ACTUALLY. WHAT I DID IN THOSE



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moments of fear was pray and direct my thoughts to something positive.

When I prayed, I spoke the words so completely, physically mouthing them so that I really felt them, saying to myself, “I really mean this.” I had so many questions for God in that moment, like, “Are you really there? Are you really the protector of everyone?” I wanted so deeply to understand what that meant, to know who God truly was, and to understand what would happen if I called upon him in that moment.

“fear directs you to disaster...”

Usually, we pray quickly and don’t think about it so much. In those moments, though, I didn’t have a choice. I felt so much fear and wanted to understand so deeply what was going on that I focused very intensely on my prayers, so much so that during those times I didn’t feel that much fear. Giving meaning to the things I was saying, focusing on really meaning them, felt like the one thing that burned my fear. If I didn’t force rules and a structure upon what I was saying, my mind would just drift back to the fear. If I told myself, “Just think about something else,” it didn’t work, because I was totally

paralyzed by fear; I had to really make a serious effort to direct my mind to something different, to something more positive and constructive. It was the only thing I could do to keep my mind out of fear.

In those moments of fear, when you can’t run away or don’t want to run away from your fear but you have to face it, you have to open up your mind and think, “What can I do in this moment?” Most times when we feel fear, it’s natural to find out how to protect ourselves, but I kept thinking to myself, “What can I do right now? Do I even have a chance of convincing this man (the pastor whose house we hid in) to take us somewhere else?” I wanted to do something, but nothing seemed realistic to me at the time.

Once I started feeling helpless, that’s when the fear set in, and it was just paralyzing. I asked, “Is this fear just here to destroy me, or is it here to tell me to act?” It’s like when you lose your job, and instead of going out and trying to look for another job, you sit at home and don’t move, and you start going through all the things that can go wrong, imagining, “I won’t have a house ... I won’t have another job,” and in your own imagination, the whole world ends. This is what fear does. Fear directs you to disaster.

At that time, the only thing I could do to block the fear was pray, because it drowned out the negativity inside of me. I prayed very, very hard and tried to mean the words as wholly as I could. And I did mean them, because for those few moments, it felt that I ran away from my own mind for a little while, like I blocked the fear even for a few



Immaculee in the bathroom where she hid with 7 other women for 91 days



The women revisit the bathroom where they hid during the genocide

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moments. I felt solace when I prayed and continued to do so from the moment I woke up to the time I fell asleep. And if I said the prayers and didn't mean them, the fear found its way into my heart again.

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Q: So you prayed to control your mind and it overrode the intensity of the fear?

A: I had to exert almost a physical effort when I felt the fear arise. Even in daily life, when we get into negative thinking, we have to direct our mind to something else, but sometimes just thinking alone doesn't get you out of it. Sometimes you need to look at something written down or listen to something directly through your ears. When you're crippled by fear, you can't even make yourself think of anything else, because your feelings are so intense. Directing yourself out of your own thoughts is one of the most difficult things to do, even in regular moments of our lives.

When I was going through that much pain, I tried everything to help my mind break free of my fear. I wrote uplifting words on my palm and literally had to force my eyes to stare at it. If you can simply think positively and have it help you get rid of your fear, that's great - then fear hasn't found a way to destroy you. But if you can't, then at



least you can say, "I'm going to read this passage that comforts me," or "I'm going to look at some uplifting words," and you put your mind there. You keep digging into the words, trying to understand what they mean. If you find your mind taking you away again, then read the words aloud, so your ears and brain can hear something positive on a more physical level.

Sometimes I wrote, "I knew you before you were born and I loved you before you were here," which reminded me that God and the world was larger than myself in that moment, larger than that experience. I also wrote, "For those who believe, all things are possible." And I did, and do, believe, and it was the only thing that got me through. I kept remembering that God created me for a purpose and made the supreme effort to direct my mind to something that was created before me and not coming directly through me. You have to indulge all your senses - ears, eyes, touch - to things outside of your feelings and fight with those weapons. We have to make an effort to fight the fear, because it is our worst enemy. It's up to us to say, "How do I get over it? What tools work for me?" You have to choose how you do it, and only you can choose to mean the words you say.

I always used to think, "Why does God want us to pray all the time? Isn't that

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Immaculee speaking about surviving genocide in 2008 and at a church in Detroit in 2007. Over 2200 people came to hear her speak cr: Arising Images.

selfish?” I realized, though, that with the fear we live with in this world, you can’t afford to just pray halfheartedly; you have to incorporate it into your daily life and personalize it. In our world, the amount of fear that’s able to reach us is immense and the temptation to get caught up in that fear is so huge that unless you bring some tools with you, something that builds you up and allows you to fight, there’ll come a time when you’ll give in to that overwhelming fear. That’s why I advise people, even people who don’t pray, to have some written words they can really mean - and it doesn’t have to be religious - it just has to be personal and uplifting. Write something down when you’re in a good state of mind, and then use it when you’re feeling fearful.

In hiding, I was so caught up with my fear about how to survive that my prayers disintegrated into “Please kill the killers. Send them to hell.” I obviously wasn’t in the right state of mind, so what I had to do was conjure up from my memory, prayers to trick my mind into getting away from the fear. I literally thought I was going to die from fear, it was so intense. I always tell people that prayer does have the power to change you, because I remember, in scripture it says, “Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us.” But I couldn’t say those words for weeks because of the fear and the pain. I told God, “I’m not going to say them, because you know I don’t mean it,” and moreover, “I don’t want to say it.” But day by day, as I went on skipping that

part of the prayer, I gained enough inner strength to say them, and I understood that I was put into this situation to uncover my deepest potential. It was then when I felt a surrendering within me.

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Q: Did you feel angry at God that this was happening and think, “Why should I even pray if He is allowing this to happen?”

A: Yes. I felt so confused and angry and resentful so many times that I can just imagine that moment right now. One time, the killers came to the house, and there must have been about 400 of them inside, and my whole human

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imagination kept telling me, “They’re going to kill you or rape you. They’re going to find you - there is no way you’re going to survive this.” All these ideas stabbed me with fear in that moment, and I remember asking God, “Please help me if you’re there.” It was almost as if I was laughing at myself, like, “Are you crazy? Do you think God exists in a situation like this? Don’t you see the reality is that they’re going to find you in two minutes?”

In that moment, if I’d given in to the reality of my mind, I would have given up right there. Something inside was even egging me on, telling me, “Open the door. Stop the torture. Don’t wait for them to kill you. Go out there and be a man! Say, ‘Here I am!’ and let them kill you with dignity.” That voice was so strong that it sounded totally normal to me in that moment.

I think we all struggle with those two voices: something that says, “Maybe there is a reason why this is happening to me.” I remember telling myself, “Maybe you should ask God to help you, even if you don’t believe in him right now, ask him for a sign that he is there.” I remember asking specifically, “Please, IF you are there, because when I’m lost I don’t even know if you’re there, IF you are there, I will not question you or why this is happening. All I ask is that you keep your promise, ‘For those who believe, all things are possible.’ Ask and it shall be given.” I said, “I’m going to hold on to those words, and whatever happens all around me - the turmoil, the war - I’m not going to question you. Just give me a sign that you are there.”



Immaculee at an orphanage in Rwanda

And it was right at that moment when I asked for a sign, and I don’t know how this thought entered my mind, but I said, “IF you exist, don’t let them find the door of the bathroom today.” It doesn’t even make any sense in my human mind that that was a practical request, but I said, “If you allow that today, I will know you are real.”

Well, they didn’t find the door that day, and all I could think was, “How can that many people, hundreds of

people, miss one door out of a four-bedroom house?” They searched the house and didn’t even see the bathroom door behind the wardrobe that covered it. That’s impossible even to the human imagination!

And many times after that day, they came to search again and again, but they didn’t find the door. But I didn’t get upset that they kept coming back. I held on to, “You showed me you are real, that much I know is true. I don’t care what is going on now.”

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My belief came to such a point that I knew God existed, regardless of what is going on around me. It wasn't going to do me any good to question him in those moments. All I wanted to ask was, "How can I block this fear? How can I get some strength? What do I do?" Don't question who exists and who doesn't; it will only paralyze you.

Q: There is a phrase, "Ask God, not as a beggar, but as a child of God."

In those moments of intense fear, when you cannot access your inner strength, how do you pray as a child and not a beggar?

A: That's so true. At that time, I felt that I was only begging for protection and strength. But as I went on praying, I began to realize that God is like a parent who knows his child. If you're lost and ask for guidance, God doesn't judge you because you're in a desperate moment - he knows the fear is so intense. Ultimately, God is love. It's up to you to seek out things that remind you of something larger than yourself. I always have an image of someone brave, someone I admire who has contacted pain in their life. The message you send to your brain is, "He did it, I can do it." Do not fear to go through the pain; accept it with strength and surrender.

Today, we see people lose their jobs, their money, their homes, everything - they don't even know what to do anymore. Those are natural reactions to things out of our control. It's always OK to ask for



help, and as long as you're asking for help, help will come. In that very moment, maybe you don't know how it will happen, but God has so many ways of helping us when we least expect it. When I was in hiding, I taught myself English with only the Bible and a dictionary, and when I got out after the genocide, I was losing my mind trying to find a job at the U.N. I tried eight times at the same place to get the job I wanted, and they kept refusing me. It was the only job I wanted, and after the eighth time, I left so discouraged. It was only after I left the office and walked out the door that a man ran after me and stopped me on the street. He had confused me with a friend of his, whom he thought was dead, and was shocked to see me when I turned around. He saw I had been crying and offered to help me find the job I wanted. It ended up that he

was actually one of the top U.N. officials working in Rwanda at the time! This is just one example of things that have happened in my life that I never could have dreamed of and which confirm the fact that God reaches out to us beyond our expectations. When things fall apart, it doesn't mean that it's over. Until your last breath is taken, never lose hope. I would have probably died out of fear or given myself up to the killers had I given up hope then. Even at the end, you can still die in peace. Dying is not the worst thing; to die in fear is the worst thing.

Fear is our worst enemy. Think of me, who lost everyone in her family, her home, clothes, pictures, every memory - if you can hold on to hope and come up from that, you can come out of any situation. Sometimes we feel special, like, "How dare this be taken away from me?" I realized I felt that way when I was in hiding, without even the most basic fundamental human conveniences like family, food, comfort - and I was fighting for my life mentally and emotionally. I was indignant at the situation I was in.

Q: Do you feel that you went through that experience to realize God?

A: There is no doubt about that. I had to realize that God is real and understand what was truly important in life. Love is the only thing that matters, and if it isn't there, nothing else has meaning. When I think about my parents and family ... everyone died. Our home was destroyed,

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my school was gone, everything we placed so much importance on was gone. But the night my mom didn't sleep because I was sick, or the time my dad's eyes were red from crying because I didn't get a scholarship, the love in their hearts, the knowing that they loved me, the clothes my dad gave to a poor neighbor - these are the things I cannot forget and which intensify in my heart every day. That is what's real, and that is how it's supposed to be. The little things we do out of love every day, these are the things that make us who we are. More than anything, I think my whole experience was meant to teach other people. To let them know to be grateful and not to worry about the small things in life. To let them not feel fear because they've lost material things, but only if they've lost themselves. To remember that in the end, what remains is only love. I also think the experience is a reminder that pain is a teacher, that it comes to us to teach us something. Anyone going through pain, if they look deeply enough and ask, "What should I be learning?" will realize there's a lesson within the pain, something that will bring you more joy than what you thought you wanted before.



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Q: Does everyone need to go through similar experiences to know God?

A: That's hard to say. I still go through challenges all the time that I don't want to go through, and they're painful. Pain hurts, and it's not anything you wish to go through.

But what I have seen is pain that people accept in the end, no matter what, becomes a gift. Suffering doesn't last forever. Accept and trust and realize what you're supposed to learn from each experience, and continue to make an effort to get out of it as honestly and sincerely as possible. Slowly, you'll move through it.

Every living person will tell you at some point in their lives, they've gone through pain and fear, no matter to what degree, but I don't think we all have to go through something as fearful as I did. As long as we can learn from each other how strong we can be, fearful moments can be a huge gift if we look at them directly and don't allow them to overcome us.

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LOANS THAT CHANGE LIVES

— *This is Rosario Cristina
Rosales Rosales.*

Rosario sells traditional women's clothing in Totonicapan, Guatemala. A small loan helped her buy new products to meet her clients' demands and increase her profits.

YOU CAN CHANGE A LIFE TODAY JUST BY LENDING \$25

Kiva is the world's first person-to-person micro-lending website. Our mission is to enable individuals like you to lend directly to impoverished entrepreneurs like Rosario, thereby empowering them to make great strides towards economic independence. Kiva provides an efficient and transparent lending platform that allows you to browse the profiles of the entrepreneurs in need, make a loan to someone you choose, track the progress affected by your loan, and eventually get repaid. Visit www.kiva.org to learn about real people who are waiting for the loans they need to improve their lives.



www.kiva.org



The No Fear Legacy

“I’ve realized that even small actions can be very powerful.”

Chris Guillebeau

is a writer, entrepreneur, blogger, and world traveler with the goal of visiting every country in the world (131 down, 63 to go.) When not traveling, he publishes the *Art of Non-conformity* blog, which gives advice on unconventional living and traveling.

LIKE MOST PEOPLE IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, I’M A CHRONICALLY FEARFUL PERSON. I’M AFRAID TO TRY TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE WHEN I TRAVEL. I’M AFRAID



I'll be irrelevant or that people won't like me. I'm afraid I'll run out of money as a self-employed writer. Fear and insecurity are a big part of my identity.

I acknowledge this as a big weakness, but I'm not really that concerned with completely negating it, just in finding ways to work around it. On a daily basis I try to be aware of it without letting it hold me back too much. What I've realized is that even small actions can be very powerful. Set the launch date. Start the blog. Tell the public about a personal goal. It's scary, but it's the only way I overcome the massive inertia and fear of starting.

It's been a long process, probably at least 10 years or so, but I no longer allow fear to run my life. There wasn't a clear tipping point for me, but rather a journey where a number of things helped me cultivate the habit of moving forward despite my

“Why worry about something that may not happen again or ever happen in the first place?”

fears. I haven't necessarily learned how not to be intimidated or fearful, but I have learned to push through no matter what my circumstances are.

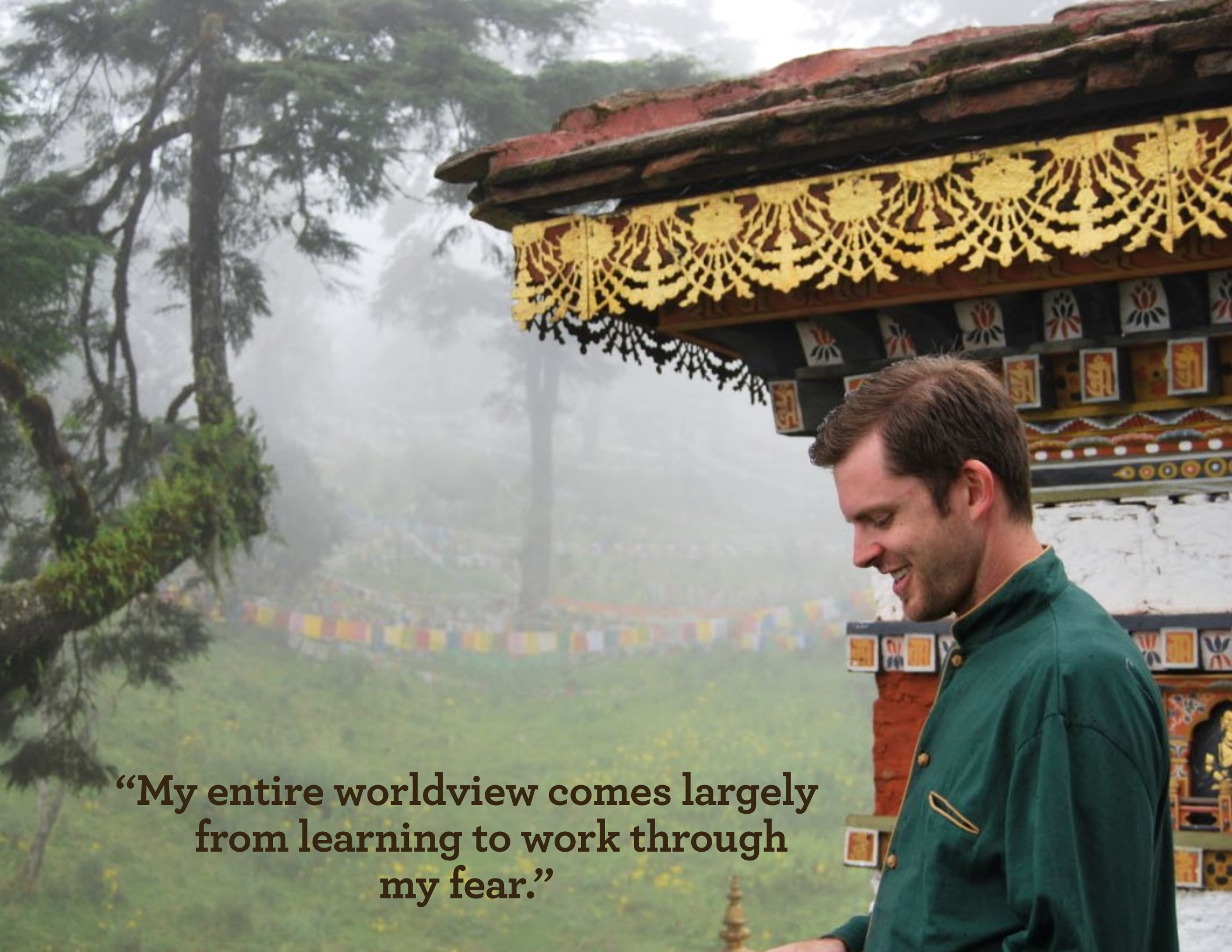
I think a lot of fear comes down to three things: fear of failure, fear of success and fear of change, which is especially important. Everyone hates change they can't control. They want other people to change but from a safe distance. Change is a good thing when electing a president or buying a Mac instead of a PC, but when it comes down to significant, personal change, most of us are fearful. But we should also recognize that fear is normal. Anyone who says they aren't afraid of anything is lying. The trick is to recognize that fact and identify the core feelings underneath the surface feelings. Discovering those latent feelings will help prevent the fear from stopping you from doing what you need to do.

THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK FILE

In the writing and entrepreneur world, I have many fears - fears of judgment, of being misunderstood, of being marginalized, of letting other people down. Each of these can be paralyzing forces if you let them consume you. What I've found really helps me is positive reinforcement. I keep a file of nice things people have said and that file only exists for me – it's only there for when I want to look at it, and I don't look through it that often, but it's nice to know it's there. Even though it's true that negative feedback is more



Chris at the airport on his way to Azerbaijan (his passport has extra pages to accommodate all his traveling!)

A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark green jacket, is shown in profile, smiling and looking down. He is standing in front of a traditional Tibetan-style building. The building's eave is decorated with a wide, yellow, woven pattern. Below the eave, there are colorful religious symbols and a small statue. In the background, a misty forest with tall evergreen trees is visible, and a string of colorful prayer flags hangs across the middle ground.

**“My entire worldview comes largely
from learning to work through
my fear.”**

damaging than positive feedback is affirming, as you begin to receive positive feedback, pay attention to it. It helps to ground yourself and get a sense of perspective around the negative feedback you receive.

THE TRAVELER'S FRAME OF MIND

Something that gives me perspective on my fears is when I think about my track record. I say to myself, “OK, I’ve done this before, and it’s worked out all right.” I remember my successful experiences and what I’ve learned from my mistakes, and I realize that a great deal of what I’ve feared in the past has never ended up happening anyway. Why worry about something that may not happen again or ever happen in the first place?

I also travel a lot, which definitely keeps things in perspective for me. My wife, Jolie, and I went to West Africa to live and volunteer for a charity in 2002, largely because of 9/11 and because we wondered where our place was in the world during that time. Like millions of other people, I was depressed and not sure what to do. I found the answer through the experience that brought me more personal growth than anything else in my life - working in Sierra Leone and Liberia right after their civil wars ended. Working in Africa, visiting some of the poorest countries in the world, working with refugees in developing nations, these experiences were so life-changing that I draw courage from them and remember that my own life is filled with



Chris during his stay in West Africa

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blessings compared to the lives of others in the world.

LEAVING A LEGACY

When I got closer to turning 30, I thought a lot about leaving a legacy. My wife and I don't

have children, so I wanted to leave a legacy of helpful lessons for anyone else interested in living an unconventional life. I realized up until then, all of the cool things I had done were a bit scattered and didn't really help people on a broad scale. Thinking about leaving a larger impact is when I decided to build a career as a writer.

FROM PAIN COMES GROWTH

Working for myself, writing, and being an entrepreneur - my entire worldview comes largely from learning to work through my fear, define what I really want and understand how my life is connected with the lives of others in the world. Closely related to that is the direct correlation between pain and personal growth. I'm a firm believer that almost all personal growth comes about through, or directly after, painful experiences. I can definitely say that I've learned much more through challenging times than times of smooth sailing. Everyone encounters hard times and challenging circumstances, and I think one of the things that separates people is how they deal with those challenges and whether they allow their lives to be defined by them.

I realize now that I'm free to live my life the way I want as long as it doesn't cause harm to others. That's the central message of what I'm trying to do with The Art of Non-conformity. As basic as it is, it seems to resonate well with certain people because there is so much pressure from external sources to be someone different than who you really are.



Chris in India during the Indian holiday "holi" celebrating color and life

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Conduit for Creativity

“When I start doing the work, the fear often dissipates.”

Julia Cameron is an award-winning author of 21 fiction and nonfiction books, including “The Vein of Gold,” “The Right to Write,” “The Sound of Paper,” and the international bestseller, “The Artist’s Way,” the ultimate guide on the creative process of the last decade. As a novelist, playwright, and poet, she has extensive credits in theater and film. Cameron is credited with helping millions of people realize their creative dreams.

“ALL RIGHT,” I TELL MYSELF, “I’VE WRITTEN 30 BOOKS, BUT THAT DOESN’T MEAN I’M GOING TO BE ABLE TO WRITE THE NEXT ONE!”

I FACE THAT FEAR EVERY TIME I



sit down to write. The solution for me is to say, “OK, I’m just going to listen and write what comes through me, and not become too hung up on quality or performing well.” When I’m able to let go of my obsession with being perfect, then the work has a chance to at least be good.

Of course the question is always there. “Will I be good enough?” is always at the back of my mind. Even with my successes now, I’ve been wondering if I’ll be good enough ever since I was 18!

But I’ve gotten used to that fear now, and over the years, I’ve come to accept it as a companion. Initially, when you feel fear, you just want to get rid of it as quickly as possible, but now I’m able to say, “I’m going to feel this fear, but I’m going to do my work anyway.” Then, when I

start doing the work, the fear often dissipates.

WORK IS THE ANTIDOTE

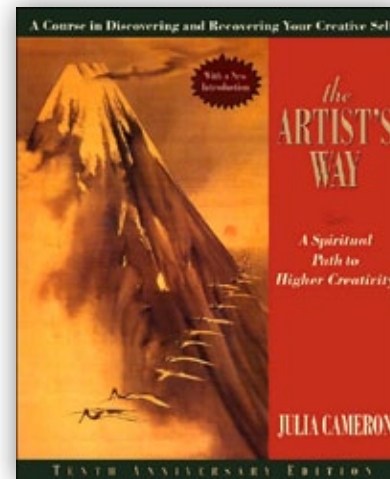
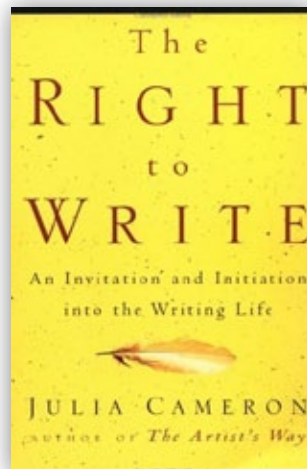
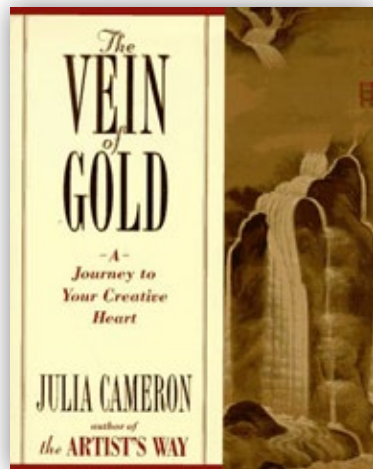
Work is a wonderful antidote for fear. I feel we have a duty to create, and when we finally do, a great deal of emotional difficulties get laid to the side. Sometimes it feels as though it’s harder not to do the work than just to do it. Personally, I used to think praying would get rid of my fear, and then I could take action. What I do now is pray, stay with the fear and take action despite the fear. I sit down at the computer, pray and listen. Then I type what I hear. It’s a process I’ve learned to practice over the years because I believe we’re conduits for creativity to work through us. When we practice like that, through the fear, there is a better chance of producing the work that’s meant to come through you.

I really do believe that many difficult factors are laid to rest by listening to that voice, and I’ve experienced it in my own life. When I go through a particularly fearful time and look back at it later, I’m able to see that I’ve been carried through by my faith in that voice. Often, I even come up with a new piece of writing that seems to be the fruit of that fearful time. I realize that although they’re difficult, they’re still fertile periods of time and I find I’m able to write and come back to center even after those tough times. Trust me, I know it’s hard to believe in yourself during those times; I sometimes find myself asking, “Will I be able to write after this?” “Will I be able to produce my work?” The answer is yes. If I’m willing to depend on a higher power, which I do and which I trust, then the answer is yes.

I’ve written many things on speculation and put in a year’s worth of writing, hoping that the book will be bought but knowing that there was no guarantee it would be bought. I’ve done that a few times, and sometimes it’s turned out, and other times it hasn’t. But the point is I believe in doing the work anyway. Why? Because work works.

PUT PEN TO PAPER

During times of heightened pain, I tell people to try to have faith, to allow themselves to be led, and to write their thoughts down, no matter how they feel. I recommend “Morning Pages,” which are three pages of free writing that allay discursive thoughts and restore equilibrium. If they have a little voice



“I sometimes find myself asking, ‘Will I be able to write after this?’”

whispering that they should take a risk, they should listen to that voice, even if they fear what may come next. We all have a higher guidance that’s available to us, and as we keep listening and being open to it, we begin to hear and understand that guidance, and it allows us to survive our challenges, economic difficulties and everyday problems.

IT’S A MATTER OF FAITH

I’ve had many difficult times that have tested my faith. I’m a sober alcoholic, and my sobriety and my faith go hand in glove, and one of my deepest fears is that one-day I may drink again. So I take many, many preventative steps to ensure that it continues and always put my sobriety first in my consciousness. For me it’s a matter of constant vigilance, and if I assume I have my alcohol problem licked, it puts me closer to a drink. The way I deal with my alcoholism is mainly by talking to other alcoholics, who share similar experiences, and this has remained true for the last

31 years and I believe it will continue. Sometimes when our belief falters, we need to piggyback on the faith of our friends who foresee our success, who support us and whose belief catalyzes our own.

When I first became sober, I had to depend upon a higher power unlike I’d ever had to before in my life. And all my faith goes back to that very moment when I was carried through that difficult time. I found that after I became sober, I needed to find a way to write that was non-dramatic and not attached to alcohol, because previously, that was the only way that I knew to write. It was difficult because basically, I needed to learn an entirely new way of writing that had nothing to do with alcohol at all. Overtime and with much practice and discipline, I did find that way of writing, and now, I post a little sign in my writing corner that says: “OK, God, I’ll take care of the quantity, you take care of the quality.” Through it all, I’ve learned to turn over my writing to the hands of the universe and not worry about the outcome so much, which has served me pretty well.

In my life, my faith plays a huge role in diminishing fear for me. My daily prayer is: “Take away my difficulties, and the victory over those troubles may bear witness to those I would help.” Then I start to write. My faith gives me perspective, allows ease in my life. Especially with writing it’s easy to become too self-involved. I find that if I put things into the hands of the universe, but still put forth the effort, I’m less inclined to think of myself as a special case, and instead become more of a worker among workers.



“We all have a higher guidance that’s available to us.”

The Most Beautiful Warmth

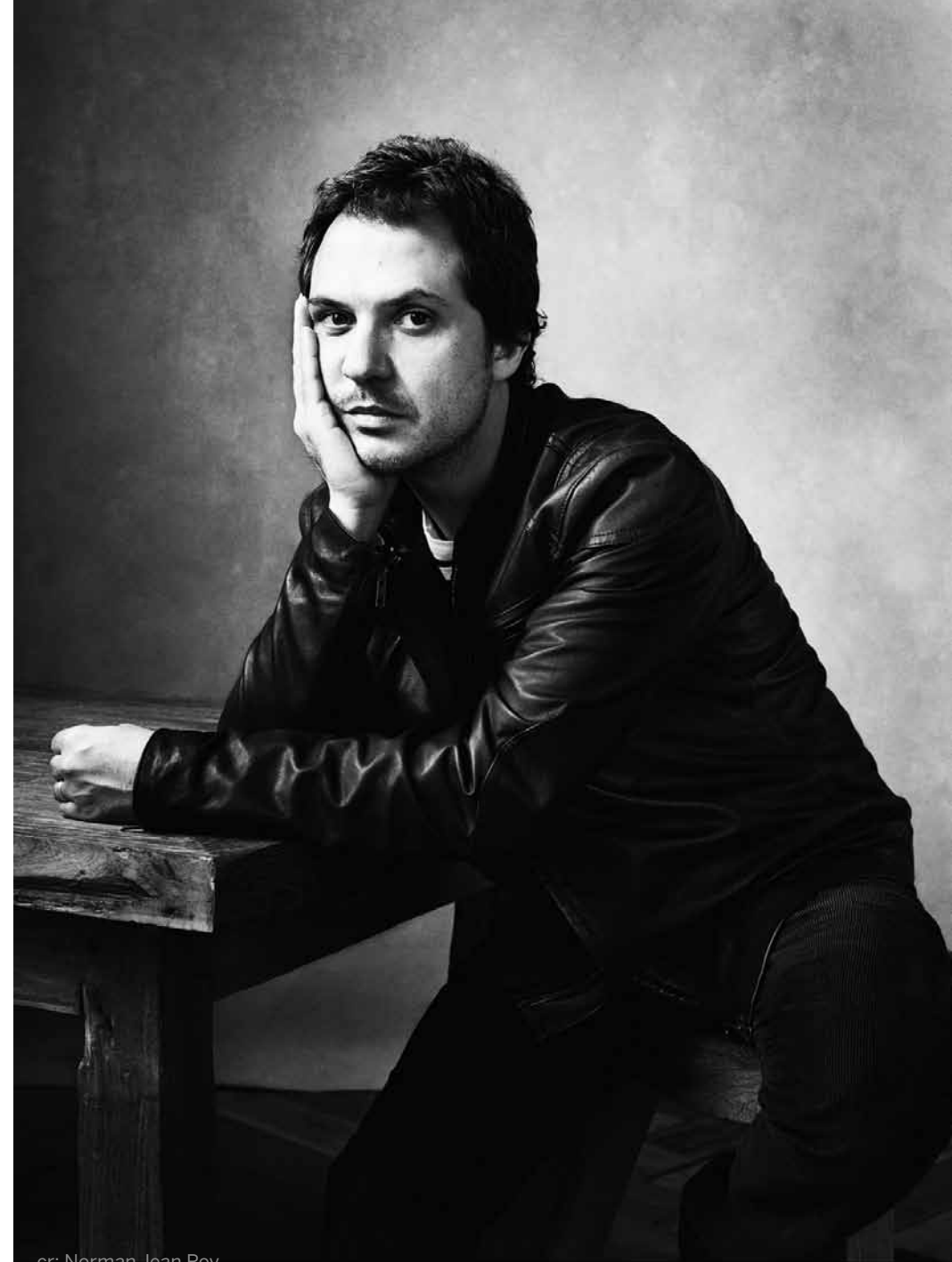
“The intent should always be more, more, more and to be 100 percent committed.”

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Platon is a world-renowned photographer specializing in politics and portraiture. He documented the 20 most fascinating men in America for the premier issue of *George* magazine and since the early '90s has shot for publications such as *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, *Newsweek*, *Arena*, *i-D*, *The Observer* and the *Sunday Times*.

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IN THE BEGINNING, EVERYTHING IS HARD, NO MATTER WHAT PROFESSION YOU CHOOSE. I WAS ALWAYS OBSESSED WITH THE IDEA WHEN I WAS YOUNGER OF “HOW DID OTHER PEOPLE MAKE IT?”



cr: Norman Jean Roy

“When you’re intimidated by the establishment or successful people, or you feel like you’re not worthy in some ridiculous way, then you’ve got to remind yourself that they’re on the same journey that you are...”

When you’re a student, you feel you’re on the other side of things, that there’s this beautiful, imaginary castle where everybody goes when they’ve “made it.” I finally learned “made it” doesn’t actually exist; it’s just an idea you look up to when you’re beginning. When you’re on the tracks, it’s the continuous journey that makes a difference, not the end result. The end result is when you kick the bucket.

I always looked foolishly and naively at how other people became successful or “did it,” and I came to realize that it’s actually irrelevant how anybody else does it if you’re looking for a formula to apply to yourself. The truth is, everyone’s journey is different, everyone’s personality is different, and everyone’s talent or weaknesses are different. It’s more important to really get to know yourself and understand who you are, understand your Achilles’ heel and your strengths, which can often be completely

unrecognized in the beginning. Your instincts are your true guide, and a lot of young people are bullied into not listening to their instincts because they don’t fit into the protocol of the establishment. It’s your instincts and emotions backed with resilience, drive and confidence that make you empowered. If you keep pushing through, eventually you break the ice.

VYING FOR VOGUE

I was very driven as a young photographer and was obsessed with working for *Vogue* as a student and had always envisioned what it was like to work there. I went in 36 times in three years with my portfolio before they finally gave me a job. I think I showed every single person my work, even the receptionist. I was just so committed to getting in there that, I think eventually, they just felt sorry for me and wanted to shut me up. You have to

have the mentality that you won’t take “no” for an answer and look at what you’re aiming for at that moment in time and see how to make it happen.

As you get older, your journey and your aspirations change, and my journey has taken a completely different path into politics and portraiture. But I’ve always listened to that voice inside, and you have to remind yourself to listen to it even as you get older. I remember a few years ago I went to see the legendary architectural photographer Julius Shulman - who’s almost 100 now - and I’m a huge fan of his, so I wanted to go and pay homage to him. When I saw him, I said, “Have you got any advice for me? I’m a young guy trying to be successful.” He said, “I’ve got great advice for you. You represent the younger generation who are all obsessed with trying to ‘make it.’ I’ve made it now, and I’m an old man. I can’t even focus the camera very well, I need help getting up and down the stairs. This is ‘made it’? If this is ‘made it,’ then ‘made it’ sucks.” He continued, “The beautiful thing is the journey, and you’re already on the journey, and you have to enjoy every single step of the way.” This advice really put things into perspective for me, that there’s no “arrival,” because you’ve always got the next step on the journey. Young people need to understand that, they need to feel that. When you’re intimidated by successful people, or feel like you’re not worthy in some ridiculous way, then you’ve got to remind yourself that you’re on the same journey that they are, and believe me, they’re just as frightened of you as you are of them. You’re young, you’re talented, you have a burning energy they don’t have, you

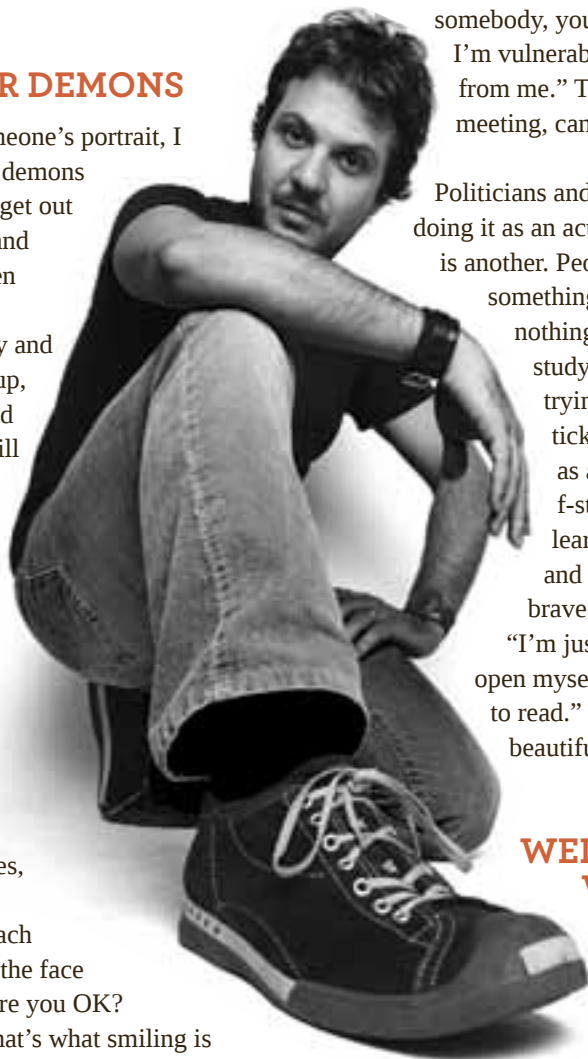
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have no history, no skeletons in the closet, you're just liberated. That's a very empowering thing, and young people need to hear and realize that.

FACING YOUR DEMONS

When I'm taking someone's portrait, I have to face my own demons every time. I have to get out of my comfort zone and reach out with an open heart. You have to be brave psychologically and emotionally to open up, because there's a good chance that people will abuse that; they can be rude back, or not play, or choose to offend you if you open yourself up too much.

I've come to realize that most of the time, people respond to my openness by opening up themselves, and human beings will always look to each other for a sign from the face or body that says, "Are you OK? Are you not OK?" That's what smiling is



for. When you smile at someone, you're giving them a sign that you're content, happy and that you have something to give. If you grimace at somebody, you give them the sign "Back off, I'm vulnerable" or "I'm in pain, stay away from me." That simple gesture can transform a meeting, can transform a human relationship.

Politicians and movie stars have figured it out - doing it as an act is one thing, but really believing it is another. People do know the difference. That's something I learned early on, and that's got nothing to do with photography; that's just studying the human condition and really trying to understand what makes people tick. That's much more valuable to me as a photographer than learning about f-stops and all that. What you don't learn out of a book is people skills and overcoming your fears and being brave with your insecurities and saying, "I'm just going to sail right out there and open myself like a bloody book for this person to read." Nine times out of 10, the most beautiful warmth comes back from people.

WELCOME TO THE WHITE HOUSE

A few months ago I photographed Michelle Obama in the White House for her first iconic session. On meeting her, I held



Platon photographing Roger Federer.
cr: Michael Schmid, Credit Suisse

out my hand and said, "Mrs. Obama, it's an honor to meet you," and she brushed my hand aside, put her arms on my shoulders and gave me a kiss on both cheeks and said, "Welcome to the White House." Now that's a devastatingly beautiful thing. That's someone who has something to give. Of course people can abuse that, people can choose not to be bewitched by that charm, but I found it incredibly beautiful. From that moment on, we connected. This is a human thing. I'm not an intellectual; I'm really not, even though I spend most of my life dealing with really clever people. I'm an intuitive person, I'm a human person. That's my job, that's my career. I find that I can be in a room full of the most intellectual people on the planet, but you can cut through all that by feeling something and showing it and being honest about yourself. You can't lie to people about yourself, because it shows. Honesty is the one thing you can connect

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“You can’t lie to people about yourself, because it shows. Honesty is the one thing you can communicate with anybody about.”

with anyone about. You can meet a king or a poor man on the street, and the one thing you have in common with them is that you’re honest about life and yourself, and it’s an amazing thing to communicate with. We all have moments, we all have heritage, we all have family, we all have relationships, and we should never be intimidated to be open about that. It’s a relief for people to hear it. It’s like, “Great, I can just be myself now.”

INSTANT EMOTIONS

The human condition is something so delicate, so precious, and I’m often thrown into meeting these fascinating characters but usually under



Platon and Annie Leibovitz on set. cr: Nick Rapaz

the worst circumstances. They’re nervous, they’re frightened, they’re suspicious. ... No one likes having their picture taken. It’s kind of like going to the dentist. My job is to use what people skills I have to try and throw away any bullshit, to get to the heart of it very quickly.

I’ve learned to use that weird intensity and all the limitations I’m given to my advantage, because it creates a hyper-real sense of energy. You’ve got half an hour with each other, or if it’s President Obama, you’ve got seven or eight minutes, so it creates an intense sprint for emotions. Everything they do

becomes hyper-important, like the move of their fingers, the tilt of the neck while they’re responding to an interesting question. That’s beautiful stuff, and the body can’t help revealing their emotions, no matter how skilled they are. You can’t hide what you’re really feeling, especially from me, because I’m good at catching it. In fact, I’m looking for it.

CHANNEL YOUR NERVES

You can’t expect anyone else to go to a dark place unless you’re going to go there yourself. You

can't expect others to be brave in your company unless you're being brave too. If anything, you have to be more brave than them because you're making the first move, and that's just human nature that can be applied to anything.

“You have to be prepared to fail, and you can't be afraid of that.”

You go into a business meeting, and the first connection you have with someone will reveal who you are. If you can somehow channel all the nerves you have in your body, and we all have nerves, believe me, I have them. Every shoot I'm on, I'm totally nervous, but I've learned to use my nerves and control them, discipline them. Nerves are just energy rushing through your veins. Your heart starts pumping and your breathing intensifies, and it's an incredible power to harness if you can learn to channel it through a pinpoint of intensity and aim it in the right direction. That makes you incredibly

powerful in any genre. So that's what I do. You try 100 percent all the time, and you can't always succeed, because we're all human - we all have good days and bad days - so it's not a mathematical formula that you can apply to emotions, but the intent should always be 100 percent commitment.

PREPARE FOR ANARCHY

For me, preparation is key - if you're not prepared technically, then you have no foundation to stand on. The technical stuff has to be down, whether you're an artist or a businessperson, it's all about preparing for your meeting, preparing for your opportunity. Once you have that, then comes the emotional side with people skills. Before you go into a meeting, you have to find a quiet moment just before the anarchy begins to calm it down and become very intimate with your soul. I often go into the restroom, look in the mirror into my eyes and remind myself who I am. It helps to quiet it down, take a few deep breaths and refocus everything, because just before a meeting is when the nerves and all the distractions come in. Lots of people come in, they throw new angles at you that you weren't prepared for, and before you know it, you're panicking inside. So you have to refocus just before that begins and find a few key things you're aiming for so you go in calm, excited and never afraid to show your enthusiasm. Never. Your enthusiasm is your biggest power. That's what I do. It doesn't always work, but that's where bravery comes in, because you have to be prepared to fail,

“You can't expect anyone else to go to that dark place unless you're going to go there yourself.”

and you can't be afraid of that. You can't be afraid to go into a meeting and say, “Everybody, I'm so honored to be here, I'm so happy to be presenting this to you,” and they all turn around and say something that's humiliating to you. You have to take that on the chin, and it means you may lose that opportunity, but the next time, you try just as hard again. As long as you learn from your experiences, if it's something you might have misjudged and you make sure you never do it again, you're building something.

IT'S ABOUT THE ATTEMPT

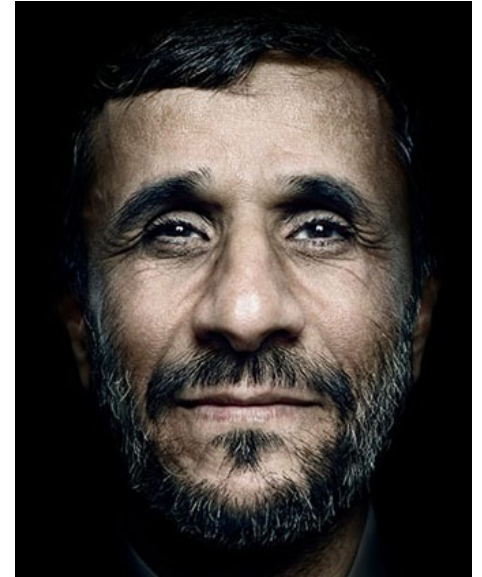
With experience, you get better and keep improving upon the things you learn. Now I'm in my 40s, but when I first started, from one month to the next I got better. You think, “Well, I'm better than I was a week ago. I'm better than I was two weeks ago.” With that in mind, it's always exciting

and you're always moving on. It's never, "I reached my point and now I'm going to cling to it and fight off all the opposition," because that's the wrong mentality. You're always moving, you're always getting better. It's going to be a journey and you're going to have a new adventure every few weeks. That's exciting.

As you get older, you mature and your priorities change. Now I have a wife, two babies and an office with staff, and my responsibilities are to them. A big fear is "Can I deliver? Can I provide?" The larger fear behind that, one that's always been there, is of failure. The irony that I'm still learning is that you have to be prepared to meet failure again and again and over and over if you want to succeed. You have to fail and face it, not deny it, because we all fail, so denying it is just putting off the inevitable. Every great career will have highs and every great career will topple once in a while. It's not about whether you're winning or losing; it's about trying. Sometimes you're successful, and sometimes you're a disastrous mess, but neither of those are what it's about, ironically. It's about the attempt. And as long as you're always pushing yourself, you look back on a life and do see that it's gradually stepped forward in one way or another.

I'M ACTUALLY KIND OF COOL

Unfortunately, our fears have been abused by the establishment. Big business and advertisers make money from our inadequacies and our fears. They amplify our fears and say, "If you feel inadequate, buy our product and then you'll feel better." It makes them money, but unfortunately, along the way, a lot of emotional damage is done, because you don't feel better when you buy it. You might have a temporary boost, but then you feel inadequate again, because you realize that you need a product to help you feel better about yourself. Nothing is really going to help you. You just have to accept who you are and say, "This is me. I'm OK with that. I'm not



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perfect, but I'm not supposed to be perfect. It's all right to be me, and being me is actually kind of cool." We need to get back to basics and hold on to what we already have. That's a good state of mind, and we should always be like that.

TOAST TO THE SEA

When my father died four years ago, I took a real tumble. Losing someone you love and someone you're close to is probably one of the biggest fears, isn't it? Losing relationships has to happen - you're given birth and you're also given death. Those two fundamental things we have to deal with, and we can't deny that they exist. But that was the first time I was ever really shaken. And New York is about success, right? America is always about success, but success can be very empty when you're emotionally unhappy or in pain.

I remember going back home to the Greek Islands to find the answer. I was walking on the beach one day, and I saw this old man sitting on a rock - he was a fisherman, probably in his 80s, weather-beaten face and hat. I sat on the rock next to him and started chatting about life. I said, "I live in New York, and I feel very alone right now, very lonely, and I'm really looking for the answer." I said, "You're an old guy, you must have lived highs and lows. Can you tell me anything I may find useful?" And he looked at me, and on his lap he had some olives and a piece of cheese and a little bottle with homemade wine in it and a glass, and it was wrapped up in a handkerchief, and he was sitting there having his

"This is me. I'm OK with that. I'm not perfect, but I'm not supposed to be perfect. It's all right to be me, and being me is actually kind of cool."

lunch. So he poured a glass of wine, ate a piece of cheese, then an olive, and then raised a toast to the sea with his little glass, and he looked at me as he drank the wine and said, "I know the answer." He said, "It's mastering the art of living." That was it. That changed everything. So I had to go away and talk to someone who wasn't necessarily "successful" in our eyes in America or London, this fisherman, probably the humblest person you can imagine, but who knew what life is about - that you must take a moment to raise a toast to the sea, to taste the wine, to look at your family or friends or even the person you're talking to at the moment and just hold their hand and say, "This is amazing, isn't it? We're here. Aren't we lucky?" And if you really mean it and can channel that energy from your gut, it's so inspiring to share that with someone.



AM I REALLY LIVING?

It's not about achieving or winning or acquiring something. It's more visceral than that. It goes back to "Who am I? Am I happy? Am I mastering the art of living, or am I just being played here?" If you can really answer those very difficult questions, I do believe it's the core of overcoming any fears you may have.

I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.

Louisa May Alcott