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FEAR OF FAILURE

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN, EXPLAINS **DR JOHN DEMARTINI**. THERE IS ONLY THE FEAR OF WHAT YOU IMAGINE IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. FEARS ARE CONTENT SPECIFIC. HERE HE OFFERS EXPERT ADVICE ON HOW TO OVERCOME YOUR FEAR OF FAILURE

If you set up a one-sided fantasy about success, that is, you imagine it is going to bring you only pleasurable and positive outcomes without also dealing with the essential disciplines and challenges and complementary opposite aspects, you're going to set yourself up for an accompanying fear of failure or fear of not obtaining or losing this dopamine driven fantasy. So the more you fantasise about your success, the more you'll breed your nightmare, or the fear of failure to go with it. Ungrounded fantasies breed nightmares or fears, just like ungrounded elations breed depressions.

So to mitigate your fear, ground yourself in what your success will bring. Because with success comes new sets of challenges, responsibilities, pains and pleasures. If you have an objective goal that is even and balanced between the benefits and challenges that go with it, you will have less of a fear of failure because you will have your strategy in place with a set of contingencies. So the more you plan your goal, the more you know all the responsibilities, accountabilities and challenges you are going to face, and the more realistic and congruent your goal, the less fantasy you will have and the less fear of failure you will feel.

Let me give you an example. Thirty-two years ago I was in New York City about to stand up in front of 5,000 people and give a presentation. I was one of six speakers, so there were six of us sitting in a line about to go up and speak each for 20 minutes. There was another speaker behind me who was really nervous. His whole dream, his life's goal was to do that particular speech. His father had done it years ago and he'd always wanted to be on that particular stage. It was bigger than life for him.

Waling up onto that stage and talking was his ultimate goal, there was nothing greater than this. So his fear of failing up in front of those people was strong. He was so anxious because he had made this speech such a grand, important thing. He made this so high on his list of goals that his anxiety was also extremely high. By contrast, I saw it as just another of one of my many speeches or speaking engagements that I had done and intended to continue doing. To me it was inspiring to have the opportunity to present there, but it was not my ultimate end all.

I loved presenting on that stage, but I was less attached to the outcome as he was and was more

focused on my message that served, than how I would be judged. I saw it as another stepping stone – one of thousands that I envisioned. So my anxiety was much less because I didn't make it as highly important. I certainly prepared and delivered an inspiring presentation and loved the audience but my long-term vision was much larger than that particular event.

So, because he made it was such a huge deal for him, it and his performance became a phobia and it showed in his presentation. Whereas I had some butterflies, but standing up and speaking at that particular event wasn't the biggest thing in the world for me. I had much bigger goals than that that I envisioned and saw it as simply another career step to be grateful for.

So, if you set a goal that is in line with your highest values, it becomes more spontaneous, and you become more objective and plan more strategically and become more prepared for the pros and the cons and the ups and the downs, the

positives and negatives, the risks of pursuing and achieving your goal, and you are therefore more grounded in your expectations. You know the responsibilities it takes to get the goal – you've softened the fantasy and you've softened the nightmare at the same time.

But if you set a goal that is not aligned with your highest values, you will probably not be as prepared or balanced and you will automatically be more vulnerable to setting a grandiose fantasy and have an accompanying fear of failure.

The content of your mind when the phobia emerges is an assumption that there are going to be more negatives than positives, more pains than pleasures, more challenges than supports if you fail. You can't fear the unknown, but you can have fear of what you imagine is about to occur. And that fantasy of what you imagine will occur if you succeed is very specific and your intuition knows there are two sides to the equation of success and the goal will also have drawbacks to balance the benefits, Making it wise to get your more objective, executive center

in your brain in line with real strategically set goals.

The fear of failure occurs when you assume that what you think is about to happen is going to bring about more drawbacks than benefits, more negatives than positives. You will not have this fear unless you also simultaneously have the assumption of the reciprocal fantasy would occur if you didn't fail, and if you succeeded, that is, you'd have more pleasures than drawbacks, more positives than negatives, more gains than losses. You have to have a fantasy of success in order to create the fear of failure. That's why setting a more balanced goal is most important and strategising the details and responsible action steps so you are more grounded in your objectives, is the key to greater achievement. 🙏

Dr. John Demartini is a human behaviour specialist, educator, author and the founder of the Demartini Institute.

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