

The Terrifying Matter of Fear

One of the issues that aspirants experience when they begin the spiritual path is the confrontation with their fears.

Those who do not meditate have to cope with fear without any “internal tools,” and may find that their fear holds them back in many areas of their lives. These ones may take medication to control their fear, or try to understand it better using psychotherapy, as they see no way to cope with it otherwise.

Those that have begun to practice meditation, using mindfulness and Vipassana methods, have learned how to observe fear and detach from it, but really have not learned how to root it out.

This webinar will examine some of the methods you can use to identify and work with your fears. So you will want to have some paper handy to do the exercises in this webinar. We will also explore how spiritual groups instill fear as a way of controlling others, and how you can begin to extricate your mind and life from these injunctions.

Processes for Working with Fear

By George A. Boyd © 2015

Fear is hard-wired into the human nervous system. It has been with our species since its inception.

Physiologically, it prepares your body to flee predators and to escape from immediate danger. But as mankind has constructed languages and established cultures, fear has expanded beyond its roots in surviving imminent threats, and has become associated with many unrelated mental patterns. For example:

- Phobia – fear of an object or location
- Worry – fear of a potential negative outcome of a choice
- Shame – fear of social opprobrium, ridicule, or rejection

- Anxiety – fear of the unknown and what is not in your control
- Paranoia – fear the others are plotting to harm or kill you
- Horror – fear of supernatural, occult, or demonic forces
- Existential Terror – fear of dying and going into eternal blackness, or non-existence

Most people experience one or more of these derivatives of our ancestral fear—not natively, for it must be learned.

Indeed, one of the primary strategies of socialization—that parents, schools, employers, the military, the government, and religious organizations use—is to instill fear to control others.

Among the threats that these agents of socialization wield are deprivation or punishment, loss of privileges and title, loss of employment, demotion and dishonor, fines and imprisonment, excommunication and supernatural displeasure and damnation—and these suggestions become embedded in the subconscious and unconscious layers of the mind, inhibiting and restraining your behavior and your freedom.

One of the challenges for the aspirant is to become disentangled from the knotted webs of fear that form a dark curtain over their spiritual heart and veil their Soul. One of the basic ways to begin to untangle this web is to do a series of processes to uncover and release their fear.

Exercise One: The Basic Fear Process

One of the fundamental ways to discover what are your fears is to do a simple process meditation. Get a sheet of paper and write down your responses.

Ask, “What frightens me?” Write down verbatim what comes up.

Acknowledge what arises, by saying “good,” “thank you,” or “okay.”

Ask, “What else frightens me?”

Acknowledge as before. Continue this process until you no longer feel any fear.

Exercise Two: Assessing Your Fears

The next step in this process is to identify which of your fears are realistic and which are unrealistic.

Realistic fear has probable or likely negative outcomes. For example, if there is an active armed gang in your neighborhood, there is a greater risk that you might be robbed, molested, or shot than in other places you might live. If you are camping in an area where there are bears, there is a genuine risk that they may raid your camp looking for food.

Unrealistic fear is very improbable or highly unlikely that negative things will occur. For example, it is highly unlikely that you will die in a plane crash or that aliens will abduct you.

For realistic fears, inquire: “What can I do to lower the risk of this occurring?” “What precautions can I take to prevent this from happening?” “You need to develop a strategy to lower your risks of this occurring; and a way to deal with it, if it does occur. You can create a chart like the following to think through these fears.

What is your realistic fear?	What precautions can you take to prevent it from happening?	What would you need to respond to it if it does occur?

For unrealistic fears, your task will be to eradicate them and release them. They create worry, anxiety, and other negative emotions. There are several methods you can use to do this.

Method	Objective
(1) Process meditation	Find where the fear originated and release it
(2) Mandala method	Examine the cognitive layers that hold the fear in place
(3) Rainbow technique	Dialog with the fear to uncover its essence
(4) Affirmation	Counter the negative beliefs that reinforce the fear
(5) Autohypnosis	Visualize yourself facing the object of your fear and not reacting
(6) Prayer	Ask for strength, courage, and faith to encounter your fear and overcome it
(7) Reframe	Act from a mindset or identity state where you are not afraid, act as if you are free from your fear

We teach methods (1) to (5) in our meditation training programs, the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation and the Accelerated Meditation Program. If you are familiar with each of these methods, use them until you can get a handle on your irrational fears, and break their thrall over your mind and your life.



Exercise Three: Uncovering the Origins of Fear and Re-choosing

We have pointed out, earlier in this article, that many of your unrealistic or irrational fears are learned. This exercise aims to help you uncover where you learned it, and to discern whether it is real or not.

Take your list of fears you made in exercise one. Label each one as realistic or unrealistic. Pick one of your irrational fears for this exercise.

Step	Response or Observation Verbatim
Ask, "Who told me this?" "Where did I learn this?"	
Ask, "Is it true?" "Is it realistic?" "Is it likely?"	
Ask, "Why is this true, realistic, or likely?"	
If the answer is that it is not true, realistic, or likely, ask, "If this is not true, realistic, or likely, why do I continue to operate from fear?"	
Notice if you are willing to let go of this fear.	
Choose to release the fear now. Notice if it leaves you.	
Notice what you are able to do, be, or have now that this fear has left you.	

If this process genuinely releases one of your irrational fears, enjoy your newly found freedom in this area of your life.

Exercise Four: Working with Derived Fear

Earlier in this article, we discussed how phobias, worry, shame, anxiety, paranoia, horror, and existential terror are founded upon fear. For this next process, you will find an example in your life of each type of derived fear, and ask, “What fear is at the bottom of this?”

Derived Fear	What Is the Fear at the Bottom of This?
Phobia	
Worry	
Shame	
Anxiety	
Paranoia	
Horror	
Existential Terror	

If you don't experience one or more of these types of derived fear, just list "none" in your worksheet above.

For this exercise, choose one of the derived fears to do your process. Once you have identified the fear at the core of the derived fear, you can use one or more of the methods you applied in exercise two, or the re-choosing method of exercise three to break up this fear. Notice what happens to the secondary emotional complex derived from this core fear when you resolve this core issue of your fear.

These key methods can be used to loosen the grip of fear on your mind and your life. Utilize these tools to free yourself from the bondage of fear, and begin to take your life back.

Exercise Five: Uprooting Religious-Induced Fears

Many religions implant fear to make believers remain faithful, live up to moral exhortations, and to remain obedient to spiritual precepts. Among these fears are:

- (1) The fear of being condemned to hell for all eternity
- (2) The fear of being separated from God
- (3) The fear of being excommunicated from the faith, and lose access to the blessings, protections, and sacraments of the faith
- (4) The fear of inauspicious reincarnation, the experience of suffering in a future human or non-human form
- (5) The fear of losing one's spiritual progress, the experience of a spiritual fall
- (6) The fear of being abandoned, or having the love and Grace of one's Master withdrawn
- (7) The fear of wasting one's life and potential, by not having taken advantage of the opportunity afforded through the faith or spiritual practice

If you have been involved in a religious or spiritual group, examine whether or not thy used fear as a means to induce you to believe in the faith, and to practice the rituals, ceremonies, ethical guidelines, and spiritual techniques of the group.

You can monitor these fear-instilling injunctions through examining them using exercise five. Identify one fear-based belief injunction that the religious group, with which you were affiliated, used to influence how you thought, how you felt, and how you behaved.

You will inquire into how it affected you through asking the following questions:

Question	Response
What was the fear-based belief?	
What did they say would happen to you if you failed to believe, do their spiritual practice, or follow their ethical system?	
How did they justify this belief? [For example did they cite a scripture, or quote a religious authority, like a Master or Saint?]	
Did you believe that you would experience that negative outcome if you failed to believe, to practice, or follow ethical guidelines?	
If you have left the group, do you still feel this fear? Do you continue to feel that this negative outcome will happen to you?	

If you determine that the fear that this religious group has instilled in you is an irrational, unsubstantiated fear, you may wish to practice the methods of exercise two and three to uproot it. Notice what you clearly know and experience in your spirituality: make this the foundation upon which you will continue to expand your spiritual insights and understanding. You can test all truths upon this touchstone of inner truth at the core of you—this is what we call your dharma.

Use the methods described here to help uncover and release irrational and unrealistic fears. Little by little, you will begin to take back your mind and your life from the vise-like grip of fear. When you do, you will discover new freedom, and gain the ability to do the things that you felt were impossible or unattainable in the mindset of fear.

The Fear of Death

The fear of death is often people's greatest fear. They do not understand what happens at death, and where consciousness goes—so they assume that their existence will just go away and there will be blackness and unconsciousness forever.

Those that meditate are able to discover that consciousness exists beyond the brain, and there are states of awareness that transcend the states of waking, sleep, and sound sleep. They discover death is nothing but the transference of consciousness from physical embodiment to embodiment in “the body of light,” which we call the astral body.

We will close our webinar today in talking about this “great fear” and what one can do to overcome it.

Overcoming the Fear of Death

Excerpted from *Question and Answers with Swami*

Q: “How does one overcome the fear of dying?”

A: “Aspirants and disciples are trained to sensitize themselves to operating within the field of the astral body. This not only allows them to become aware of the phenomena of the inner Planes, but also to die consciously.”

“Dying consciously means that the individual transfers attention and consciousness into the astral body, and unites with the Higher Self (or Higher Octaves of Being in the case of advanced Initiates).”

“The individual then witnesses the transference process from physical embodiment to astral embodiment from a detached and safe viewpoint. Rather than being passively dragged from the physical body, the individual who consciously dies watches the process established in the Soul...”

“Fear of death may be seen to be an obstacle, both in living and in meditation. In individuals, where the fear of death is especially strong, taking risks and venturing into new areas of experience may be seriously curtailed, for fear of losing one’s life.”

“Fear of death, for the meditator, may appear as a rather formidable ogre on the threshold of the unconscious, making it exceedingly difficult to leave the body focus and do inner activities in the astral body, due to overwhelming anxiety and terror.”

“By gaining a clear insight into what death is and what happens after death’s transition from living in the physical into living in the astral, this fear is definitely reduced...”

“Many so-called anxiety neuroses and phobias, at their very core, are linked to this ever-present fear. To confront it and successfully overcome it will go a long way towards relieving a good portion of the stress to which modern life is heir.”



Thank you for attending our webinar today!

