

Transcending Fear

By Richard Harvey

Fear lies at the core of our attachments. We possess fear as if it was a fact of life and our heart is taken captive by fear. Let me guide you further into this subject. Fear creates a kind of fog around us. Everything becomes hazy, out of focus, and distorted. We worry and inflate objects of anxiety into monsters. We delay matters that demand our attention and then we are shocked to find we set them aside. Anxiety stalks us, fear paints a terrifying backdrop on our lives, and often we experience a background horror or dread.

Yet, we are attracted to fear, and the importance of this attraction lies in the dual nature of fear itself. On the one hand we are attracted to fear, because fear is synonymous with the ego. So from the egocentric view we are attracted to ourselves; we find ourselves attractive. The ego-self, the small self was created out of a most basic fear, the fear of survival. To protect ourselves from insensitivity, hostility, and ignorance in early years we have formed a false character, a self that acts as a shield or skin to protect us and most particularly defend our soul against danger. This character of necessity becomes attractive to us, as we become attached to it. In the indoctrination of our early years, our very life depends upon it. But when you look at it carefully, it is all fear: the character, the defensiveness, the made-up ego-self, everything is fear. So in this view of fear, we are simply attracted to the bogus savior, the one who now clearly costs us far more than we can afford to keep paying, as it becomes clear to us how our being is contracted and our life is limited by its suffocating over-protection.

On the other hand, we are attracted to fear out of the impulse to grow in love. Growing in love is returning to our true nature and it implies also growing in wisdom, developing inner peace, equanimity, becoming authentic, real, and ultimately realizing our inherent divinity. Fear may become a signpost for our inner growth and development, because it tends to reside on the border of the known world. This world, the one with which we are familiar, defines the inner restrictions we lay on our own life. It is our job, our challenge, if we are committed to the inner journey, to push these boundaries, to expand beyond them, to grow and develop. How do we recognize where exactly the inner boundaries are? Where is the border between the known and the unknown? The answer is fear. To the committed inner seeker fear becomes a friend, even an ally. Always demonstrating where we restrict our growth, fear leads us on. So this is the dual nature of fear.

Ultimately there is one fear, which when faced squarely eradicates all fears. But we seem to want to put it off, although it is the only certainty of life in the relative realm. It is death. The great saint and sage Ramana Maharshi transcended the fear of death when he was sixteen years old. He realized the fact that he was going to die with shock and pronounced 70 terror and he decided, rather than put it off, he would deal with it then and there. So he dramatized death. He lay down with his body stiff, stopped breathing, tightened his lips, and "saw" his body cremated and turned to ashes.

From an interview in 1930 we have an account of what happened next in his own words. He thought:

But with the death of the body, am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert, but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of I within me, apart from it. So I am the Spirit

transcending the body. The body dies but the spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit. All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truths which I perceived directly almost without thought... I was something real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with the body was centered on that I. From that moment onwards, the "I," or Self, focused attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death vanished once and for all. The ego was lost in the flood of Self-awareness. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time. Other thoughts might come and go like various notes of music, but the "I" continued like the fundamental note... a note which underlies and blends with all other notes.

One more point about fear. It is physiologically so similar to excitement in its bodily expression that it can be a helpful exercise to "court" fear and transform it surprisingly easily into an excited bodily state of arousal. Change the concept; change the experience. The resulting energy after you have transformed fear from negativity to positivity can be used or stored! If it is inappropriate to use it at the time, store it in the body by sitting with a straight back, breathing in deeply down the front line of the body from the nostrils to the perineum. When you have established this front-line breath over several in and out breaths, follow the out-breath up the spine to the crown of the head, so creating a circular breath. Your hands should be connected, your left hand in your right hand, your tongue should be on the roof of your mouth and you should be sitting in a chair or on the ground with a stable base. Your head and neck should be straight, in line with your spine so that your chin is slightly tucked in. Relax your shoulders and your whole body. In this way you can learn to tolerate energy, increase its intensity, and develop your potential for transforming fear into positive energy.

Fear is one the most primal ways in which we dissipate the life force of the Self, and the return to the Self we never left involves reclaiming and harnessing this energy. So, this practice can be an essential part of the spiritual path.

This article is an excerpt from Richard Harvey's book [Your Divine Opportunity](#).