

# **Healing FEAR and Anxiety Through EA Fellowship**

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Hi, my name is Rosemary and I'm powerless over my emotions.

The topic of this talk is "Healing FEAR and Anxiety Through EA Fellowship".

I began attending attending Emotions Anonymous 29 years ago at Renaissance Unity Church located in Warren, MI at the age of 21. Like most, or I can safely assume, ALL of you listening, I deal with emotional problems with the issues of FEAR and anxiety being paramount in my case.

I am going to be reading from a prepared outline. A handout of this talk will be available in PDF format afterwards. You can request the handout at [eatelephoneconference@gmail.com](mailto:eatelephoneconference@gmail.com)

So, what is the definition of fear?

The dictionary defines fear as both a noun (a person, place or thing) AND a verb (a word used to describe an action, state, or occurrence).

As a NOUN, fear is:

- (1) an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.
- (2) a feeling of anxiety concerning the outcome of something or the safety and well-being of someone.
- (3) the likelihood of something unwelcome happening.
- (4) a mixed feeling of dread and reverence.

As a VERB, fear is described as:

- (1) to be afraid of (someone or something) as likely to be dangerous, painful, or threatening.
- (2) to feel anxiety or apprehension on behalf of.
- (3) to avoid or put off doing something because one is afraid.
- (4) used to express regret or apology.

(5) regard with reverence and awe.

Fear is an Old English word. Its earliest meaning, in the (seven hundreds) 700s, was "danger or peril." It was NOT used for the FEELING of fear until the (thirteen hundreds) 1300s.

Often when we hear the word FEAR, it is preceded by the word IRRATIONAL. The root word PHOBIA comes from the Greek word Phobos which means IRRATIONAL FEAR. As most all of us are aware, there are innumerable words with the suffix — PHOBIA. The list is endless.

If you have a fear, I can say with all likelihood that you NOT ALONE in that fear and there is most likely some Greek — or some other strange or exotic sounding word — ending in the word PHOBIA. If you can't find the word for your fear, make one up! — no one will notice the difference as long as you use the suffix PHOBIA!

Almost everyone has an irrational fear or two — of snakes (which are all poisonous) for example ... or your annual dental checkup. For most people, these fears are minor. But when fears become so severe that they cause tremendous anxiety and interfere with your normal life, they're called phobias.

A phobia is an intense fear of something that, in reality, poses little or no actual danger. Common phobias and fears include closed-in places, heights, highway driving, flying insects, spiders, and needles. However, you can develop phobias of virtually anything. While most phobias develop in childhood, they can also develop in later life.

If you have a phobia, you probably realize that your fear is irrational, yet you still can't control your feelings. Just thinking about the feared object or situation may make you anxious. And when you're actually exposed to the thing you fear, the terror is automatic and overwhelming. The experience is so nerve-wracking that you may go to great lengths to avoid it— inconveniencing yourself or even changing your lifestyle. If you have claustrophobia, for example, you might turn down a lucrative job offer if you have to ride the elevator to get to the office. If you have a fear of heights, you might drive an extra 20 miles in order to avoid a tall bridge.

Now that we know the dictionary definition and etymology of fear and have an idea of where the words anxiety, irrational and phobia fit into this puzzle, WHAT IS FEAR? Often we have heard the terms fight or flight (or sometimes the similar word: flee). Have some of you also heard Fight-Flight-Freeze? — F cubed, F to the third power or F3.

## Quotes

FIGHT: “What you resist persists. What you face dissipates” and “Feel the fear and do it anyways”.

FLIGHT/FLEE: “Flee an enemy who knows your weakness”. — Pierre Cornielle, a French dramatist.

FREEZE: “Fear is the paralyzing emotion that inhibits or restricts normal feelings of love, confidence, and well-being”. — Tim LaHaye, author and speaker.

The Fight-Flight-Freeze response is the body’s automatic, built-in system designed to protect us from threat or danger. For example, when you hear the words, “look out!” you may be surprised to find how fast you move, and thankfully so, as you narrowly miss an errant frisbee being thrown at the beach. Or when you see a bear on the trail up ahead, you stop and remain quiet and still until it moves on. In both scenarios your system demonstrates its effectiveness at protecting you from danger.

The Fight-Flight-Freeze system is critical to our survival from true threat or danger, but what happens when there is no real danger? Interestingly, anxiety can also trigger this system into action when we believe there is threat or danger even if there is not. For example, you may yell at your friend Greta for pushing you into agreeing to speak at a phone conference when you don’t feel ready (fight). Or you avoid going to a party or leave early because you don’t feel comfortable around unfamiliar people (flight). Or, your mind goes blank when your boss asks you a question (freeze). All of these are examples that can cause anxiety, which in turn, can mistakenly trigger the F3 alarm. Public speaking, parties, and answering questions are not dangerous situations, but if your alarm system is set to “high alert” it will go off, even in relatively harmless situations.

These are some of the common physiological changes your body can make to protect you from danger:

## Head

When you breathe too fast or too deep, you may feel a little lightheaded. This is called hyperventilating. Don't worry. It's not dangerous! Your body is just trying to get more oxygen and blood to your large muscles so you can fight, run, or hold still.

## Eyes

When you are confronted with danger, your pupils get bigger to let in more light so you can better spot the danger. This can make things seem brighter or fuzzier, and you may even see some black spots or other visual effects.

## Fingers

When you are faced with danger, blood from your fingers starts to move towards bigger muscles, like your biceps. These bigger muscles need energy to help you fight or run. Your fingers may feel numb, cold, or tingly as blood moves away from them.

## Arm Muscles

When faced with danger, your body tenses up, so you are ready to spring into action. The muscles in your arms tense up so you can strike out at danger, pull yourself away, or hold still.

## Sweat Glands

Your body works hard to help you get ready for danger. It takes a lot of energy, which can cause your body to heat up. Sweat from your underarms, palms, or forehead cools down your body.

## Heart

When your body is preparing itself for action, it makes sure blood and oxygen is pumped to major muscles like your biceps or thighs. This gives you energy and power to strike out at danger or to run away as fast as you can.

## Stomach

When your body thinks you are in danger, it puts all its resources into protecting you. Other systems in your body (like your digestive system) slow down, because your body thinks giving you energy to deal with the danger is more important than digesting that sandwich you had for lunch. Of course, this means you might get an upset or sore stomach from that sandwich sitting in stomach acid while it waits to be digested once the danger passes.

## Thigh Muscles

When faced with danger, your body tenses up, so you are ready to spring into action. The muscles in your legs tense up so you can run away, fight back by kicking, or hold still.

There are some common misconceptions about anxiety and I am going to give you a lecture called —

## Anxiety 101: What You Need to Know About Anxiety

### Anxiety is normal.

Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. Anxiety can be helpful as it serves to alert us to potential threats, protect us from danger and help us reach important goals. For example, it's normal to feel anxious when encountering a bear on a hike or while giving a talk entitled "Healing FEAR and Anxiety Through EA Fellowship" .

## Anxiety is not dangerous.

Although anxiety feels uncomfortable, it is temporary and will eventually decrease. The sensations we experience when anxious are designed to alert us to potential danger or threat and to help us get ready to protect ourselves. These sensations are normal and part of our body's natural response mechanism that help us "amp up" when faced with danger and to "calm down" when the threat has passed.

## Anxiety is adaptive.

Anxiety helps us cope with real danger, such as crossing a busy street or exiting a burning building, by helping us stay alert and take action. It can also help us perform at our best, by motivating us to study for an exam or prepare for an interview. When we experience anxiety, it triggers our flight-flight-freeze response, and prepares our body to react. For instance, our heart beats faster to pump blood to our muscles, so we have the energy to run away or fight off danger. We need some anxiety. Without it, we would not survive.

## Anxiety can become a problem.

Some anxiety in certain situations is normal and useful. However, if you are constantly feeling anxious or worried, and avoiding daily activities, school, work, or socializing because you're too scared, anxiety has become a problem. Think of anxiety like fog: if it covers everything, makes it hard to see, stops you from doing what you usually do, and generally gets in the way, then it has likely become a problem. In small amounts we can maneuver through the fog and get to our destination, but when the fog is so thick we are "grounded" ... and its time to take action!

## Anxiety can be alleviated.

There are many activities and techniques that we can try to make anxiety less severe. We have all heard and probably tried various suggestions, but sometimes we forget and need to be reminded. These actions can include:

- attending EA meetings both face-to-face and via the phone
- exercise or yoga
- listening to music
- reading
- taking a shower or bath
- getting enough sleep
- eating healthy
- meditation (knowing that you are safe and triggering a relaxation response)
- mindfulness (learning to be in the present moment and not trapped in your thoughts and feelings — or more simply learning to accept and “let go
- share with others, spend time with friends and most importantly—laugh!
- ... basically any HEALING activity that is done towards caring for yourself mentally, physically AND spiritually.

The last part of Anxiety 101 is that,

## Anxiety is part of life.

Trying to eliminate anxiety from our lives is almost impossible, and EVEN IF IT WERE possible, we need it for survival and our lives might become TOO restrictive and boring.

Alas, fears, phobias and anxiety are NOT curable! However, through my years in the Emotions Anonymous 12-Step program, I have found that the EA Fellowship provides me with the information, tools, resources, and camaraderie for me to become an expert on coping. Since fear is everywhere, one of the greatest gifts I can give myself is the confidence AND skill to tolerate anxiety whenever it occurs ... and to continue living my life anyway!



I would like to finish my time with you today with a spiritual reading. #4 in the Just for Today section from EA's Yellow Pamphlet states: "**Just for today**, I will take care of my physical health; I will exercise my mind, I will read something spiritual". Most every day, that means I read the daily reflection from Emotions Anonymous' Today book which is available through the Service Center for \$20 plus nominal shipping and handling charges. If you don't currently own this wonderful daily meditation book, I highly suggest you purchase it. Having seen many other daily meditation books centered around the 12 steps, I am not biased in saying it truly is THE most well written of the lot. That being said, I am instead reading from the daily meditation book Each Day a New Beginning:

<https://e2.hazeldenbettyford.org/shared/webmail/220262/248593163/1e36e02460543a372d7b3cfc58e0274562a8933f49981b8e56b3eaab27a8be41#.XaqywurNsEE.facebook>



Life has got to be lived—that's all there is to it. At 70 I would say the advantage is that you take life more calmly. You know that, "This, too, shall pass!"

~Eleanor Roosevelt

Wisdom comes with age, but also with maturity. It is knowing that all is well in the midst of a storm. And as our faith grows, as we trust more that there is a power greater than ourselves which will see us through, we can relax, secure that a better time awaits us.

We will come to understand the part a difficult circumstance has played in our lives. Hindsight makes so much clear. The broken marriage, the lost job, the loneliness have all contributed to who we are becoming. The joy of the wisdom we are acquiring is that hindsight comes more quickly. We can, on occasion, begin to accept a difficult situation's contribution to our wholeness while caught in the turmoil.

How far we have come! So seldom do we stay caught, really trapped, in the fear of misunderstanding. Life must teach us all we need to know. We can make the way easier by stretching our trust—by knowing fully that the pain of the present will open the way to the serenity of the future.

*I know that this, too, shall pass.*

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### Today's reading is from the book *Each Day a New Beginning*

These meditations, one for each day of the year, speak to the common experience, shared struggles, and unique strengths of a woman, especially those seeking support and spiritual growth in recovery.

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