

Getting Free from Fear:

**Four Principles for Getting Unstuck
and Living the Life You Want to Live**

Molly Gordon, CPC



Of all base passions, fear is the most accursed.

William Shakespeare

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Foreword

Listen to what you know instead of what you fear. Richard Bach

Chances are that you downloaded this book because you know that fear keeps you stuck in at least part of your life, part of the time. As a coach, I know that fear is responsible for much, if not most, frustration and failure. When my clients learn to work with their fears, they step into a world of virtually unlimited possibility and satisfaction. I love witnessing the transformation that occurs when fear stops running the show.

This book outlines four principles that have freed dozens of my clients and hundreds of readers of my [newsletter](#) from crippling fear. Applying these principles will empower you to understand fear and to choose how you respond to it, creating a space for greater meaning and prosperity in your life.

I hope you'll share your experiences with me by emailing your personal stories about fear and how you set yourself free.

Molly Gordon, CPC
June, 2000
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How to Use This Book

*Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win
by fearing to attempt. William Shakespeare*

You'll get the most value from this book if you follow these guidelines:

1. Read one principle at a time, re-reading it as needed until you feel clear about the principle.
2. Do the exercise in each section before moving on to the next step. It will deepen your learning if you keep a written record of the exercises.
3. Gremlins are the natural allies of fear. You can spot a gremlin by listening for critical, sarcastic and skeptical inner commentary. Notice what your gremlins are saying to you as you read and work the exercises. Jot down their most common comments. Acknowledge these and choose to move forward anyway.
4. You can deepen your understanding and develop your facility at applying these principles by keeping a Getting Free from Fear journal. Make a commitment to yourself to journal every day for 21 days. Each day note how fear showed up, identifying the type of fear (Principle 3), exploring how you may have amplified it (Principles 1 and 3), recording how it shows up in your body (Principle 2) and naming ways to move through it (Principle 4). You'll find a journal at the end of this book to support your progress.
5. Have faith. Call on whatever form of Higher Power you believe in, asking for insight, support, and grace to shift your relationship with fear.

6. Practice. The way you respond to fear is the result of billions of internal messages (you say 50,000 things to yourself every day of your life!). It will take some time and some repetition to shift your patterns. Be patient, be persistent. You will succeed.

7. The blue text is linked to pages on the World Wide Web. To use these links, open this book on your computer and click on the links.

Principle 1: F.E.A.R.

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Marie Curie

Fear and Choice

First and foremost, understand that you always have a choice about how to respond to fear. You can cave into it, struggle with it, accept it, or work around it. You always have a choice, a choice you can make again and again or that you can change based on your assessment of what is best for you.

Redefining F.E.A.R.

Knowing that you have a choice about how to be with your fears, consider the following reframe. Think of F.E.A.R. as an acronym for Fantasy Expectations Appearing Real. FEAR takes unsupported premises about impending doom, amplifies them, and presents the alleged results as inevitable failure.

I envision unsupported fears as hot air balloons. Once we grab hold of them, we are flung all over the countryside, terrified, out of control, anxious and powerless. Yet we fail to notice that no one forced us to grab onto the balloon in the first place. How would it be to stay put, safe on the ground, while the balloons go off on their merry, scary way?

If this image captures your imagination, play with it. Next time you have a fear attack, imagine a big hot air balloon touching down near you. Notice how tempting it is to grab on (or even to climb into) the basket, and then see yourself deciding to let it

go. Watch the balloon careening over the landscape, while you remain, safe and sound, on the ground.

Exercise

Make a list of all of your fears, writing as fast as you can to block the internal censor. Include EVERY fear, however small or irrational. Then read them aloud, suspending judgement. Allow yourself to feel the fear without grabbing onto the hot air balloon. Notice that being afraid does not have to mean losing ground.

If it feels comfortable, share your list with a friend. Before sharing your list, explain that you simply want a witness, that you are playing with how it is to acknowledge your fears without being pulled off center by them. Be clear that you are not asking for help and that you do not need advice. You do not need to be fixed. Ask your friend to simply listen, and to acknowledge you for being conscious of your fears.

Naturally, one of the most powerful ways to deal with what you are experiencing is to hire a coach. I'd be delighted to provide you a complimentary sample session to help you evaluate that alternative. Coaching groups, which form throughout the year, are another excellent way to get free from fear. Groups form around common themes such as careers, creativity, and prosperity and run for four to thirteen weeks depending on the content. New groups are listed in [The New Leaf](#), my email newsletter.

Principle 2: Tap into Your Body's Wisdom

Fear is excitement without breath. Robert Heller

Your Wise Body

Our bodies are safe havens, the home bases in which we ground ourselves so that we can meet our fears with grace and clarity. They are wise companions, ever-present witnesses to our experience and guides to the next step, and their wisdom is available whenever we take the time to check in and hear what they have to say.

Tapping In

In order to tap into your body to get free from fear, it is vital that you first acknowledge your body and become willing to let go of all the ways you may have stifled its messages to you. Many of us have run roughshod over the gifts of the body, numbing our senses with food or other substances, dulling our awareness with overwork, and ignoring symptoms or turning them off with painkillers.

Note, I said “become willing” to let go of your body-deadening patterns. Please do not keep yourself stuck by looking for perfection on this point. All that is needed is that you make a beginning by acknowledging the ways that you turn away from your body’s wisdom and affirming that you are willing to be different. You do not need to know how you will change this, only that you desire to do so.

You can transform the way you meet fear by simply holding from day to day a curious wondering about how your body might be a safe haven. How might you

cultivate this wondering? Is there a symbol for how it would feel to be safe and utterly at home in your own skin? How might you use this symbol to bring your awareness to the possible safety of your own body? (Clue: ask your body to suggest a symbol to you. Then draw it, paint it, dance it, sing it, sculpt it. This is a personal expression of your body's wisdom, not an art project. Critics are not invited to this party.)

Exercise

Here's an exercise that will connect you with that safe inner space as well as open a dialogue with your body.

Sit quietly, feet flat on the floor, hands relaxed at your side, back straight and eyes gently closed. (You may lie down if you will not fall asleep.) Scan your body for sensations by simply directing your awareness to your feet, then ankles, calves, knees, thighs, hips, etc. all the way up your body to the crown of your head. As your attention pauses at each area, simply notice what is. Suspend judgment, making no attempt to change things. This is not a relaxation exercise, though you may find it profoundly restful. It is first and foremost a practice of noticing how it is with your body right now.

It can deepen your experience and keep your attention from drifting to speak your observations aloud. "I notice a sort of buzz in my left calf. Hmmm, my right thigh is a bit tight. I feel a kind of excitement in my abdomen. My right shoulder blade is higher than the left...." This is also a way of letting your body know, "Yes, I hear you. Yes, I notice that, too." Just as our friends would soon tire of a one-sided conversation, our bodies will only speak to us when we listen and acknowledge what they have to say.

Now, find the place of center in your body. Often this is at the center of the abdomen, a couple of inches below your navel. Find where it is for you by sensing into your body for that place where you feel whole and intact. (It can help to recall a time when

you felt whole and intact, then notice how you experience that in your body.) Breathe into this place and allow the well being you find there to expand into the rest of your body.

Don't fret if nothing seems to be happening, or if you do not seem to understand what "sensing into your body" means. Simply set the intention, spend a few minutes with your body in interested curiosity about what might happen, and listen. If there is resistance, simply notice that, too, and let it be. Over time you will become more skilled at connecting with your body. For now, let it be enough that you are saying, "Hello."

This practice is a part of a larger practice called Focusing, which is detailed by Ann Weiser Cornell in her book *The Power of Focusing: A Practical Guide to Emotional Self Healing*.

While her focus is on healing, the potential of focusing extends beyond healing into accessing inner guidance and support for living a life based on your core values, a life that is free from fear.

Principle 3: Not All Fears Are Created Equal

Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right. Henry Ford

W. Timothy Gallwey and Robert Kriegel give an entire chapter to the subject of fear in their book, *Inner Skiing*. They posit two kinds of fear, Fear 1 and Fear 2. Fear 1 magnifies danger and vulnerability while minimizing your sense of competence. In other words, Fear 1 is Fantasy Expectations Appearing Real.

Fear 2 mobilizes your whole being for effective action. It includes a series of marvelous physiological changes that prepare the body for peak performance. Fear 2 focuses attention, provides adrenaline for extraordinary effort, and sharpens perception. Fear 2 promotes effective action, Fear 1 paralyzes us and prevents action.

Exercise

Return to the list of fears that you made in the first exercise in this book. Now, you have the opportunity to sort your fears by type. Work through your list, labeling each fear as:

Fear 1

Fear 2

Not sure, or includes aspects of both kinds of fear.

If you have not yet written a fear list, do so now. Writing down your fears is a powerful step toward managing them. Until you write them down, they are like so many vehicles in gridlock. Once you have them on paper, you can park some and

move others, clearing a space for forward movement. In this way, writing down your fears creates a space for awareness and choice. (Tip: Refrain from judging yourself or your fears. Just list and label them.)

Making the Distinction Between Fear 1 and Fear 2

Once you have a list, notice where Fear 1 and Fear 2 show up. The following distinctions will help:

- **Fear 1** promotes panic and confusion. **Fear 2** promotes clarity and purpose.
- **Fear 1** is often about saving face. **Fear 2** is about stepping outside of your comfort zone.
- **Fear 1** triggers avoidance of the facts. **Fear 2** heightens awareness and perception.
- **Fear 1** wants you just to stop. **Fear 2** wants you to move forward powerfully and safely.
- **Fear 1** magnifies danger and vulnerability. **Fear 2** calls on our capacity to respond to danger.
- **Fear 1** originates in our ego mind. **Fear 2** is a whole-system response.

Both kinds of fear are present in many situations. What is important is to use your powers of assessment and discrimination to turn down the volume on Fear 1 while calling on Fear 2 for the energy and focus to move forward. With practice, you can actually transform Fear 1 into Fear 2 by focusing and accurately assessing the real risk and your real competence.

For example, Fear 1 makes a terrified skier (and I speak from experience!), see a shear drop where the slope is actually quite moderate. When the skier stops and measures the actual slope by holding her pole parallel to it, she increases her awareness of actual conditions, reducing the influence of Fear 1. By continuing to examine the slope, seeing in her mind's eye how she would ski the slope if she chose

to, she further reduces panic. When at last she takes off down the hill, trusting in her competence and in her assessment of the challenge, she completes her shift from Fear 1 (panic) into Fear 2 (concentrated exhilaration).

Learning to work with fears in this manner takes practice. The pay off is potentially unlimited as you remove barriers to learning, performance and joy.

Principle 4: Homeostasis

*If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams,
and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined,
he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.
Henry David Thoreau*

The above quote is inspiring. It is also incomplete, for it is also true that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams he will meet with homeostasis.

What Is Homeostasis?

Homeostasis is the tendency of a system or organism to stay the same. It's like a thermostat that keeps change within a certain range. Call that range your comfort zone. In order to learn and grow, it is necessary to step out of your comfort zone, yet every time you do, homeostasis kicks in, slowing your progress or halting it altogether.

Homeostasis often shows up as fear. You'll be moving along nicely toward a certain goal when, seemingly out of the blue, you get panicky and stop. You get an interview or you have a proposal accepted, and once the initial excitement wears off you are left with the sick certainty that you cannot live up to the opportunity.

Because homeostasis is a systemic response to change, it can feel like self-sabotage. There is an important difference: sabotage implies that some part of you has an active desire to undermine your progress. In contrast, homeostasis is a value-neutral, automatic response to change. It is not the result of a secret desire to fail or of any hidden agenda other than the built-in tendency of the system to stay the same.

If you mistake homeostasis for self-sabotage, you may waste precious energy beating yourself up for limiting beliefs or hidden agendas. If, indeed, you have such issues, it will be well for you to address them. However, you can be in marvelous mental and emotional health, free of limiting beliefs, and still run into a brick wall when homeostasis kicks in.

Understanding Homeostasis

Fortunately, the better you understand homeostasis, the less power it will have over you. Here are some key points to keep in mind.

- a. Homeostatic fear shows up regardless of whether the change is good or bad, wise or foolhardy. The intensity of fear and resistance is related to the size and pace of the change, not to the quality (good, bad, wise, unwise) of the change.
- b. You may encounter homeostatic fear among family, friends, colleagues and clients as well as in yourself. This does not have to mean that these people have a secret desire to sabotage you. Their concerns may simply be the expression of natural resistance to any change.

Working with Homeostasis to Get Unstuck

While you cannot root out or prevent homeostasis and its attendant fears, you can negotiate with them.

- Break the change in question into smaller steps. This reduces the intensity of the resistance. (Remember, homeostasis increases with the **size** of the change, not the **nature** or **value** of the change.)

- Pace yourself. Making the change over time instead of all at once reduces the intensity of the homeostatic reaction.
- Analyze the **actual** risk. Remember what you learned about Fear 1 and Fear 2 in Principle 3? Fear 1 magnifies danger as it minimizes your competence. Seek reliable information about the scope of the risk you are taking and the best means to meet it. The better your information about the actual risk involved, the less huge it will seem.
- Set milestones and celebrate when you reach them. This gives you a conscious history of successful change and makes it easier to move into scary territory in the future.
- Design an environment that supports learning and growth and avoid people, places and things that undermine learning. While a certain amount of resistance is inevitable (that's the whole point), why waste any more of your energy and attention than is absolutely necessary on overcoming the tendency to stay stuck?
- Make a list of aspects of your environment and brainstorm the choices you can make in each to support stepping out of your comfort zone. For example, you might choose to ask your friends to support you in using empowering language or you might choose a gym based on its emphasis on safe training techniques.

Laying a Foundation to Minimize Homeostasis

Commit to fundamental personal practices that keep you centered, whole and flexible. Such practices instill in you a sense of stability and groundedness that minimizes the

feeling that you are at risk when you step out of your comfort zone. Helpful practices include

- Exercise
- Meditation
- Journaling
- Participating in a support group
- Working with a coach.

Make the Most of Setbacks

Reframe setbacks as perfectly created exercises in the workshop of your life. It will be easier for you to move through homeostasis if you let go of the fantasy that there is or should be a point in your life after which you will have “arrived” and will no longer need to change.

Where Do You Go From Here?

It takes 21 days to develop a habit. I invite you to use the following pages to record your insights and practice the principles in this book as you work with your fears. There is room on each page for you to record your fears, to distinguish Fear 1 from Fear 2, to explore how fear shows up in your body, and to work with homeostasis. In addition, each day features an inspirational quote.

Remember to review the principles in this book as you do your daily writing. The intentionality and care you bring to this process will be repaid a thousandfold in increased confidence, flexibility, and courage.

Day 1

*You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing, which you think you cannot do.
Eleanor Roosevelt*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 2

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something else is more important than fear. Ambrose Redmoon

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 3

The more I traveled the more I realized that fear makes strangers of people who should be friends. Shirley MacLaine

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 4

*People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing.
That's why we recommend it daily. Zig Ziglar*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 5

We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes. John F. Kennedy

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 6

*Confidence comes not from always being right but from not fearing to be wrong.
Peter T. McIntyre*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 7

*Never fear shadows. They simply mean there's a light
shining somewhere nearby. Ruth E. Renkel*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 8

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Marie Curie

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 9

Because of their courage, their lack of fear, they(creative people) are willing to make silly mistakes. Frank Goble

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 10

The components of anxiety, stress, fear, and anger do not exist independently of you in the world. They simply do not exist in the physical world, even though we talk about them as if they do. Dr Wayne Dyer

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 11

*You either move toward something you love or away from something you fear.
The first expands. The second constricts. Tom Crum*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 12

*It often takes more courage to change one's opinion than to stick to it.
George Christoph Lichtenberg*

Fears I noticed today

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it.

Day 13

*Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure.
Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing. Helen Keller*

Fears I noticed today

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 14

*You can't discover new oceans unless you have the courage to leave the shore.
Anonymous*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 15

*You can't be brave if you've only had wonderful things happen to you.
Mary Tyler Moore*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 16

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Franklin D. Roosevelt

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 17

Be brave enough to live creatively.... You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you will discover will be wonderful. What you will discover will be yourself. Alan Alda

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 18

Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed. Michael Pritchard

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 19

To him who is in fear, everything rustles. Sophocles

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 20

*Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty.
To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom. Bertrand Russell*

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Day 21

Try a thing you haven't done three times. Once, to get over the fear of doing it. Twice, to learn how to do it. And a third time to figure out whether you like it or not.
Virgil Thomson

Fears I noticed today:

Fear 1 Fear 2 Both

How fear shows up in my body right now:

Where I notice homeostasis and what I choose to do about it:

Congratulations!

If you have worked through this book and kept a 21-day journal of your experience with fear, you have set in motion a long-term shift that will empower and support you for the rest of your life.

I'd love to hear your experiences as you meet and manage your fears. Send them to me at molly@mollygordon.com. And be sure to subscribe to my email newsletter, *The New Leaf*, for free, weekly inspiration and motivation for leading a life of meaning and prosperity. Click on the link to subscribe.

Molly Gordon

Feel the fear and do it anyway. Susan Jeffers

Bibliography

If you view this bibliography on your computer, you will find that each of these books are hot-linked to their respective pages on Amazon.com where you can read summaries as well as reviews by other readers. If you choose to purchase a book from one of these links, I will receive a commission. These commissions help to support the free information available through my newsletter and Web site. Thank you!

The Aladdin Factor, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0425150755/mollygordoperso>

Success is Not an Accident, Tommy Newberry

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1886669090/mollygordonperso>

The Power of Focusing : A Practical Guide to Emotional Self-Healing, Ann Weiser Cornell

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/157224044X/mollygordonperso>

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<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0060961023/mollygordonperso>

Inner Skiing, W. Timothy Gallwey and Robert Kriegel

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The Artist's Way at Work, Mark Bryan, Julia Cameron, Catherine Allen

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0688157882/mollygordonperso>

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What Color is Your Parachute?, Richard Bolles

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About the Author

Molly Gordon is a Certified Professional Coach. Her practice is devoted to men and women who are ready to play their bigger game: to build lives full of meaning and prosperity. Since 1996, she has coached dozens of clients through personal and professional transformation. Her unique coaching style is informed by her experience as a business owner and artist as well as her lifetime commitment to service and creativity.



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Coaching, Your Next Step?

I support my clients to live lives of meaning and prosperity. Learn more about coaching at my Web site www.mollygordon.com. When you are ready to transform your life, email me, molly@mollygordon.com, for a complimentary sample session. Until then, please accept my heartfelt good wishes.