



ALIVE!

TRUMPING FEAR

GRASPING IN THE dark for my phone, my terrified mind sought to force my trembling fingers to dial 911. It took hours to calm my nerves even after the police arrived. Fear is not a foreign emotion. I have often felt fear in the form of butterflies and a pounding heart just before public speaking. I felt fear when my husband was diagnosed with cancer. Standing in line to ride a roller coaster, a fearful dread has come over me. I was afraid as a child when my mother ran off in the dark parking lot of the LA fair, chasing two young men who had just stolen her purse. Fear comes in various shapes and sizes in response to real or imaginary situations, present and future events.

Sudden fear, like the fear I experienced while dialing 911, has the potential to cause one to freeze or jump over a six-foot fence. There are subacute, underlying, chronic fears that guide behaviors, generate insecurities, and influence our reactions to others. There are health fears that sometimes motivate individuals to lose weight, get checked up at the doctor's office, or start to live healthier.

Marketers prey on unconscious fears to motivate customers' knee-jerk reactions so they will purchase the products. They present a situation, such as being in an important board meeting, where the stakes are high and there the person is, pitting out. The solution? Their brand of anti-perspirant of

course. In the next scene, the same scenario is presented, but now the individual is calm and self-possessed because of what they rolled under their arm.

Parental use of fear as a tactic to encourage obedience or behavior change might sound like, "Wait until your dad gets home." Or it could be just a look that lets the kids know that if they don't stop, there will be consequences.

Rather than setting large goals, focus on developing small habits . . .

Fear can get us to leap out of bed when we hear an intruder, propel us to run faster than we've ever run before, get us to obey as children, or cause us to sign up for a stop-smoking program. While fear is a powerful motivator, it is not an enduring one. Its power is short-lived. When it becomes chronic, fear is debilitating.

When it comes to our health, lasting, effective lifestyle changes can only be achieved through positive motivation. It's important to know the facts and the probable outcome of a given course of action or state of being. Being informed that your disease could cause blindness, for example, might get you to start taking better care of yourself. To succeed long term, however, we need to tap into what inspires.

Personal testimonies of others who feel so much more alive and have experienced breakthroughs in their health as a result of a lifestyle change can be extremely inspiring. They can help us change our self-talk from, “You are such a failure. You are going to mess this up. You will always be fat. This disease is going to kill you. You can’t . . . just give up” to “You can do it too.” Self-talk is, in essence, internal dialogue. According to research, self-talk can increase confidence, improve coordination, control fine motor skills, enhance focus, and improve your performance by improving emotional outlook, thoughts, and energy. In one study, researchers found that motivational, instructional self-talk prior to vertical jumping resulted in increased velocity around the knee and greater height than neutral self-talk. Speaking faith and hope, applying the promises of God to yourself rouses courage and changes outcomes.

Courage is not something you are or aren't born with. It is developed through experience.

Another point that I think is worth acknowledging when addressing motivation has to do with Newton's First Law of motion. Newton stated that objects at rest tend to stay at rest and objects in motion stay in motion unless acted upon by a force. It is a lot easier for someone who exercises consistently to continue consistently exercising than it is for a sedentary person to get off the couch and exercise. No new revelation there. Reminding ourselves of this fact though can help explain why, in making lifestyle changes, the most important thing is to get going. Rather than setting large goals, focus on developing small habits, like walking for ten minutes every day or something equally easy. Become a person that is devoted to your workout even though the workout is small. Once you get going and begin tasting the beginnings of your own personal transformation, Newton's Law will kick in and you can build up to the habit.

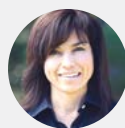
Courage is not something you are or aren't born with. It is developed through experience. Growing up along the San Andreas fault, I have felt the earth tremble and the house shake multiple times, inevitably in the middle of the night. In the beginning, as a little girl, I was terrified and could only run to my mother's room. But later, I could think more clearly and

place myself in safe positions. Conquering fear has less to do with not feeling the emotion and more to do with controlling it. Conquering fear means not letting it control you, having the courage to do what needs to be done—doing the right thing—in spite of its presence. Exerting the force needed to defy our state of motion (or lack of motion).

David's training to meet Goliath, a man seeking to destroy God's people, came in the form of a lion and a bear. It was these experiences, in which he trusted in God to carry out his appointed work that developed courage. I wonder what David's self-talk was prior to offering himself to fight Goliath? What was he thinking as he was running, with sling in hand towards Goliath? What was my mother thinking as she was chasing those young men who stole her purse through the dark parking lot?

Whatever it is you are facing in your life, where courage and motivation are needed to do the right thing, to work change, God's Word provides the most powerful force mankind can tap into. The Bible says that “the love of Christ constrains us” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Love not only motivates, it empowers. It trumps fear. It casts it out (see 1 John 4:18). When the mind is saturated with this love, it will be able to think calmly in the midst of panic, trusting in the One who is not afraid of fear.

God grant me courage . . . to change the things I can. 🕯



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