

## **Fear is natural . . .**

And is usually a good thing.

Just think what would happen if we had no fear. A lion approaches, and we think “I’ll just finish this book and then I’ll get up and run!”

Thankfully, fear makes us stand up and run like a wild thing, without stopping to think about anything.

But in today’s world, fear can become disabling. After an accident, a robbery or a fight, or even just an illness, we might find that we are afraid.

We might be afraid of the place that the incident happened, or afraid of people who look anything like the person who mistreated us. Perhaps we are even so afraid that we cannot carry out our normal activities.

Fortunately, these fears are quite easy to treat. Here is what you need to do:

### **Stop putting yourself down for being afraid.**

Fear is your protector, it is not a sign of weakness. Young children stay alive near cliffs because they are instinctively afraid of heights.

Fear is learned in the body. If we have a shocking experience, our body remembers the circumstances, and tries to take us away from the scene if we go there again. Very sensible!

### **Accept that fear does not go away entirely by itself.**

Fear will fade with time, but you have to do something before you can be completely free of fear.

### **Accept that it is normal to be afraid (perhaps afraid of lots of things) for a while.**

This is called “generalisation”, and it’s a normal reaction after an accident or frightening incident. At first, your body is afraid of everything that is even a bit like the thing that caused the fear. It’s like spilt water; it spreads all over the floor.

As you continue to face the fear, that “pool of fear” begins to dry up, and you’ll be afraid of fewer and fewer things.

Then, as you keep facing the fear, all of your fear will be healed.

### **Listen to your thoughts.**

Although fear is in the body and not in the mind, you can make it much more disabling by the things you think.

For instance, some people say to themselves “I could never go there again”, but if they really did go, they might find that their fear is a lot less than they expected.

And if you say things like “People shouldn’t treat each other that way” or “They should have done something to prevent it” or “I’ll get even with them for this”, these thoughts will make you feel sick.

Notice those thoughts, then stop them.

### **Gather the facts about the thing you fear.**

If you don’t know what really happened, you’ll imagine something much worse.

So find out what happened, and why. How likely is it to happen again? What can you do to prevent it?

In other words, learn from the experience!

### **Decide to put up with discomfort, to earn your freedom from fear.**

To unlearn fear, we need to **stay** in the presence of the fearful thing until our body learns that there is no longer any danger. It typically takes 60 to 90 minutes for the fear to go.

If you try and fail, (i.e. if you let yourself run away) the lesson is not learned, and the fear remains just as strong as it was before.

So you need to be sure that you can stay and not run. That means

- ◆ Take it in stages you can manage, or
- ◆ Get someone to help you.

For instance, if you fall off a horse, getting straight back on is the best medicine, and that’s just what your riding instructor will help you to do. Perhaps your heart will beat very fast, and you might feel sick in the stomach for the first ten minutes, but soon the agitation changes to excitement, and you’re riding again.

Or you can do it in stages—sit on a saddle that is not on a horse for 90 minutes the first day; stand near the horse but separated safely from it for 90 minutes on the second day; get to know the horse again on the third day; then get on the horse.

This progressive approach is called “graded

exposure". You could do most of this by yourself.

**What if fear comes back?**

Not a problem, just repeat the treatment.

You can reduce the chances of fear returning by using variations. Here's an example.

A young woman was afraid of an intersection where an aggressive driver had run into her car. First we stood near the corner for an hour until she was no longer afraid. The next day we stood on the other corner. Then she drove around and around the block, coming in from every available angle.

The whole treatment took about three hours over two days.

**Your program:**

What do you fear?

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What can you do to reduce the chances of that thing happening to you again?

.....

.....

How can you expose yourself, safely, to the thing that you fear?

.....

.....

Do you need someone to help you to stay there and not escape?

No / Yes (who?)... ..

**Now make a commitment:**

Gather all facts by (date) .....

First exposure .....

Second exposure .....

Third exposure if needed .....

# The Pocket Fear Eliminator



How to stop being afraid of things that won't hurt you, while staying safely away from things that really do bite!

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A companion to  
The Pocket Stress Reliever

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For more copies of the Pocket Fear Eliminator, contact . . .

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