

Is it fear, or status, that holds you back?

Shy people know how to speak, they just don't do it. It might be fear of failure, or it might be fear of success! To understand this, let's look first at dogs and then at hens.

Dogs—the great escape artists

I had a dog who was afraid of a stick. Perhaps he thought the stick was a snake, but whatever was going through his mind, he refused to go near it. He stood at a distance, and barked.

Because he could run away, he never found out that the stick was harmless. But I knew it was just a stick, so I took the dog by the scruff of the neck and put the two together.

The dog was cross with me for about a minute, then it stopped being upset. It lost interest in the stick, and **its fear went at the same time.**

Without someone to push it, the dog would never have found out that the stick wasn't dangerous.

Your fears of social situations might be a bit like that, so just as I did for the dog, I'm here to give you a push to get through fear. Here we go:



Gather the facts about the thing you fear.

Some people give up dating after one awkward experience, or won't go for any more

job interviews because the last one was so bad. But if you ask your friends, you'll find that they have probably persevered through many uncomfortable dates or interviews before they found someone they could talk to.

So, **talk to other people about how you feel** - you'll discover that you're not alone!

See if it really will kill you.

Do you want to give a speech, or apply for a job, or ask for something, but you know you'll simply DIE of humiliation if it doesn't work out?

Test it! Ask a friend to role play. Get them to act as the other person. Ask them how they would handle it in your shoes, and try again.

Just stay there, don't escape!

Now for the real thing. The only important thing is to see it through—no matter how badly you're doing, **stay there!** (As the doggy tale told us, escaping strengthens fear, but contact overcomes it).

If you feel really nervous, tell the other person "I'm feeling really nervous". Then smile if you can (but don't look for sympathy.)

They've been nervous too, and they'll understand.

Stay until the interview, speech or date is over, see it through, and you'll find that the next time will be easier.

That deals with what dogs can teach us. Now for hens!

Hens—the pecking order

Hens can teach us about the limitations we put on ourselves.

In every barnyard, you will find:



Top hen—can peck every other hen. Supremely confident!



Middle hens—pecked by top hen, and can peck bottom hen. Fairly confident.



Bottom hen—pecked by everyone! What a life...

When shy people try to speak, they feel like the bottom hen. It doesn't mean that they feel short of self-worth, it just means that they don't feel able to **compete**.

Fear of winning

I remember running down a street with a friend at school. We ran faster and faster, but then I stopped—not because I couldn't go any faster, but because I didn't want it to be a "real" competition. Because if it was real I would have to face either losing, or beating, a friend.

Some people don't want to stand out from the crowd. They think that if they win, they'll be expected to perform even better next time!

Competition is part of our animal heritage, so come to terms with it! You don't have to become a competitive maniac, but if you are competition-shy (like I was), **try harmless competition.** Tennis, chess, armwrestling—learn that you can compete, win and lose, and people will still like you.

*The next step might be uniquely human—
stepping right out of the pecking order!*

Take part, without competing

In our town, there was a popular music band. One of the men was flashy and impressive. I thought “the girls will like that one best”, and it depressed me—I could never be like him.

I was wrong. The one that the girls liked best of all was the quiet one, who never put on an act, who was just himself.

People who put on acts—who try to be something they’re not—aren’t necessarily confident. If they were, they wouldn’t try to be someone else!

So in social situations, forget competition—it destroys the very thing you want. Instead, **trust yourself to just be you**. You might not be loud like other people, but that doesn’t matter—the world needs quiet people as well as noisy ones.

How to be a success

You might think that successful people have all the answers, and that unsuccessful people don’t. That’s not it at all!

Successful people are cheerfully, unashamedly ignorant. It’s just that they pay attention—lots of attention—to the problem, then they trust themselves to find an answer.

Here’s how I do it. Whatever the problem might be—back injuries in a factory, a company which isn’t profitable, or someone’s personal problem—I know

for certain that however ignorant I am at the beginning, I will (through watching and listening) end up understanding what is happening. In the meantime I feel comfortable asking really dumb questions.

So, if you want to succeed, do your homework, then trust that you can find the answer!

Summary

I think that being yourself—trusting yourself with all your virtues and drawbacks- is the key to success and happiness.

Why try to be anyone but you?

My program:

What sensible thing am I afraid of doing?

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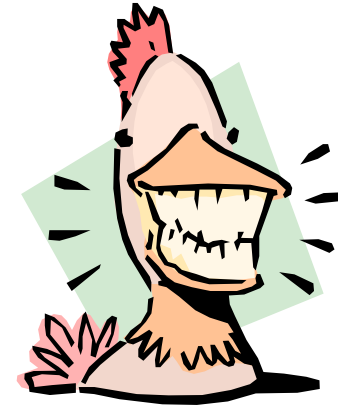
If I try and fail, will it kill me? Yes / No

I will do the thing I fear, and I promise myself that I will not escape,
on this date: /...../.....

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A Pocketful of Confidence



Quick, but not necessarily
painless, remedies for shyness
and social anxiety

by David Brown
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A companion to
The Pocket Stress Reliever