

A GUIDEPOSTS OUTREACH PUBLICATION

# Overcoming Anxiety and Fear

BY  
NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

## *About the author . . .*

Norman Vincent Peale, often called the “minister-to-millions,” was senior minister at the historic Marble Collegiate Church in New York City for 52 years.

Dr. Peale and his wife, Ruth Stafford Peale, founded Guideposts in 1945, an interfaith ministry dedicated to helping people from all walks of life achieve their personal and spiritual potential. Previously, in 1940, they founded Peale Center for Christian Living, which is dedicated to continuing Dr. Peale’s legacy of positive thinking and faith. In 1995, the two organizations merged and Peale Center is now the Outreach Division of Guideposts.

Dr. Peale wrote 46 books, including the classic best-seller, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, which has demonstrated that a change in a person’s attitude will change his or her life.

Throughout his life, Dr. Peale emphasized the individual’s ability to overcome life’s problems and seize its opportunities, through faith in God and belief in oneself. He proved this in his own life. Although he was a minister of the Gospel, and believed in God, he didn’t always believe in himself.

As he matured from a shy boy into manhood, his faith led him to the conviction that God had placed a portion of His power in all of us. He reasoned that if this was the case, then each of us was capable of doing great things, so he wholeheartedly embraced the Bible as an infallible guide for creative living. This was Dr. Peale’s message: If you believe that the power of God within you is equal to any of life’s difficulties, then a rewarding life will be yours.

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## What This Booklet Will Do for You

IF YOU are troubled by anxiety and fear, this booklet will do specific things for you:

*First*, it will assure you that anxiety and fear are removable. You definitely do not have to be afflicted by anxiety and fear any longer. You can be free of their continued harassment.

*Second*, this booklet will help you better understand yourself and know why you have the problem of anxiety. This is important. Self-understanding is necessary for self-release.

*Third*, this booklet will help you lose the fear of something happening to loved ones. It outlines a wonderful method of putting them confidently into God's hands, where is found the greatest earthly protection, so only good surrounds them.

*Fourth*, this booklet will help you find lasting peace of mind. It will help you drive out dark shadows of apprehension and deepen your sense of confidence. It will give you calm assurance for the days ahead.

*Fifth*, it tells you how to achieve real faith in God, how to sense His strengthening Presence, and how to feel certain that you are always in His loving care.

These techniques will work for anyone who really works them. Use the booklet faithfully, and you can be assured of the blessings listed above.

May God guide and bless you, as you find complete release from anxiety and fear.

# 1

## Anxiety and Fear Are Removable

**A** PRIMARY fact that we need to know about anxiety and fear is that they are removable. Any emotion is removable. Anger is removable. Depression is removable. Hatred is removable. Prejudice is removable. So is the inferiority complex removable. In fact, every negative emotion is removable. Once you fully understand this concept, you are ready to make important changes in your life.

The first step in overcoming any fear is to realize that it is, for a fact, removable. If your mother, father, or grandfather had apprehensive fears, you need not have them also. If you are willing to be harassed by fear all your life, you can be. But fear is removable.

Thomas Carlyle said, "The first duty for a man is that of subduing Fear.... A man's acts are slavish... till he have got Fear under his feet."

Once you know that fear is removable, next comes the process of removing it. This involves a practice not popular with the present generation: namely, self-discipline. In the old days, this was called willpower, and willpower used to be thought of highly. Some

proponents of today's liberal educational philosophies dismiss it as old-fashioned—corny, you might say.

But this softened-up philosophy threatens to produce a generation of Americans in which the incidence of neurotic states of mind will reach ever-mounting highs. Americans formerly were normal people, because they practiced self-discipline. They believed that any personality weakness is removable. They believed, specifically, that through faith in God and Jesus Christ amazing personal rehabilitations occur.

Theodore Roosevelt said, “I have often been afraid, but I wouldn't give in to it. I made myself act as though I was not afraid, and gradually my fear disappeared.” Think courage and act it, and you control and finally remove your fear.

Eleanor Roosevelt said it well also: “You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you look fear in the face.” And, when you do that, you discover that anxiety is removable.

When a person determinedly stands up to something, that something tends to fold and finally give way. There is much less danger in standing up to a difficulty or fear than in trying to avoid or run away from it. Face fear—it never is as fearful as expected.

Most fears are baseless and empty. A friend of mine figured out that, over his lifetime, 92 percent of the things he feared never did happen. Of the eight percent that did happen he said, “I stood up to them, handled them, and overcame them.” He added, “all fears are controllable.”

## Face Life's Storms

An old cowboy said he had learned life's most important lesson from Hereford cows. All his life, he had worked cattle ranches where winter storms took a heavy toll among the herds. Freezing rains whipped across the prairies. Howling, bitter winds piled snow into huge drifts. Temperatures dropped to below-zero. Flying ice cut into the flesh. In this maelstrom of nature's violence, most cattle would turn their backs to the icy blasts and slowly drift downwind, mile upon mile. Finally, intercepted by a boundary fence, they would pile up against the barrier and die by the scores.

But Herefords would instinctively head into the wind. There they would stand, shoulder-to-shoulder, facing the storm's blast, heads down against its onslaughts. "You most always found the Herefords alive and well," said the cowboy. "The greatest lesson I ever learned on the prairies was to face life's storms."

The lesson is valid. Do not attempt to evade things you are afraid of and go drifting with the wind trying to keep away from them. Every human being has to decide again and again whether to meet fearsome difficulties head-on or to try running away.

You can never outrun fear. Try it and you will run yourself down, a pathetic victim of anxiety. Try a better way. Take a long, searching look at your fear. Stand up to it. It probably won't happen anyway. And if it does, you have what it takes to meet it and successfully control it.

# 2

## Attack Anxiety With Common Sense

**A** WHIMSICAL old preacher once spoke on a familiar text, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three. . .” “But,” he added, “the greatest of these is common sense.”

Anxiety may be defined as continuous and pervasive apprehension that can become fear in depth. It is basically an accumulation of irrational mental attitudes. When an anxiety is taken apart, you will find, in most cases, there is not as much to be afraid of as you had thought. Anxiety is like fog: huge mists arising from little moisture. Blow fog away and moisture remaining that caused it is infinitesimal.

I always encourage people to *visualize* themselves hitting anxiety hard with reason. When you employ the power of your mind, and unemotionally dissect your anxiety, ask yourself if there is any real reason to feel nervous and apprehensive. You must realize that you possess enormous potential power to use cool, factual thought and action. Keep anxiety under reason-control and it cannot develop into deeper fear.

List the reasons you should be anxious and the

reasons you should be confident on a piece of paper. Start the confidence column with the word *God*. Under this write everything about the problem that you can relate to God, which should be just about everything. The more sincerely you do this, the less you have to write in the anxiety column.

You will discover that your anxiety is generally motivated by emotional causes. If you constantly emphasize commonsense considerations, emotional elements will give way, finally, and your intelligence will take control.

The Bible says the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me” (Job 3:25). In fearing is the tendency to produce the thing feared. But it is also true, paraphrasing the Bible, that those thoughts that we greatly believe will come upon us. But faith brings good happenings to pass, and this is the truth to hold to.

It is important, then, to eliminate fear thoughts and thereby stop the flow of evil happenings. A doctor came into a sick room where family members were sitting near the patient’s bed—thinking and talking about unfavorable outcomes. The doctor said, “I want you all to leave. I cannot cure my patient as long as you are here sending out death thoughts.” It was a bitter cold day, but he threw open a window, letting a frigid breeze whip through the room. “I’ve got to fumigate this room of your anxiety thoughts,” he said. That wise doctor hit anxiety hard, with strong common sense and action.

## **An Action Program**

When you are struggling with anxiety, here is what to do. Sit down with yourself and ask, “How much sense is there to this? What good is accomplished by my worrying over this? Will my anxiety help the result, or perhaps harm it?” The more you apply common sense, examining the situation with cool, rational intelligence, the more you will reduce self-built emotion. This will help reduce anxiety to size.

You can reduce anxiety immeasurably, if you hit it really hard with reason ... but you must keep on hitting it. Uncontrolled emotion cannot live in the presence of common sense and intelligent faith.

For example, suppose you feel anxious about a loved one. The thing to do is to employ every intelligent, logical, protective procedure. Everyone knows there is in this world the element of accident. But the chance of anything happening to your loved one is minimized by the law of averages. In fact, the law of averages actually works out to people's good rather than to their bad. It proves that people do not generally live under a cloud of misfortune or in the midst of ill events. Those who do are exceptions, not the rule. So you can reduce or eliminate anxiety by reminding yourself that God Who has permitted the element of accident has also minimized it, and has filled the world with His wonderful protection.

There is another law also—namely, thoughts tend to reproduce themselves in kind. If a person constantly

sends out apprehensive anxiety thoughts, he actually tends to produce accident and misfortune. Conversely, if you surround your loved ones and yourself with faith thoughts, protection thoughts, love thoughts—all of which may be called God thoughts—then you encompass your loved ones and yourself also with the most powerful protection in this world.

Anxiety is likely to produce what you are anxious about; but intelligent faith produces protective commonsense results. Anxiety is like a magnet. It draws unhappy results to itself. But so also is faith. Faith is a more powerful magnet, one that draws to itself the most incredible blessings.

# 3

## Let Go the Fear of What Might Happen

**A** MOST painful and devastating form of anxiety is the haunting fear of what might happen. This type of fear leaves its victim in a constant state of apprehension that some disaster, trouble, illness, or accident may befall a loved one or himself. To live with the perpetual worry that some axe is going to fall can develop a very unhappy state of mind, to say nothing of the acute tension it creates. It is surprising how many

people are made miserable by vague imaginings of sinister things that might occur.

An illustration is that of a middle-aged man plagued from boyhood by apprehensive fear of something “terrible” happening. Always this anxiety lurked in his mind, sometimes dominant, sometimes fairly quiescent, but never was he completely free of it.

Seemingly groundless anxiety does have its reasons for existing in a human mind. In this instance, it stemmed from an acute sense of insecurity based on his parent’s poverty. As a child, there was never enough money to pay bills, and the family could never be sure even of the next meal. As finances improved, other insecurities developed. One was the mother’s uncertain health. She had always had high-blood pressure and the boy had become anxious anytime the doctor came and wrapped the testing apparatus around his mother’s arm. He watched nervously and apprehensively as the doctor pumped it up, looked at it solemnly, pumped again, studied it, then folded it away, saying nothing. But the sensitive and anxious boy knew that his mother’s blood pressure was again elevated.

The mother lived in perpetual fear that some physical disability would come upon her—a stroke, for example. She made the mistake of warning the boy that he must always be prepared for what might happen to her. So for years, especially when away from home, he never heard a telephone ring that there was not heart constriction and breathlessness as he picked up the phone. It might be the long-feared word....

The father, also, projected his fears upon the sensitive boy. Grown man that he was, the father still feared the dark and went around trying doors and windows at night. Also, he was fearful of sea travel. "There is only a plank between us and the implacable sea," he would remark grimly. And of air travel he would say, "An engine might fail. There is always a possibility of human error and mechanical failure." He was pathetically fearful that something might happen to him or to his loved ones. He was afraid about his job, that he could not sustain his position; therefore he was always looking for another one in which at long last he might be secure. Security—insecurity. These emotion-charged words battled in the boy's mind until he became a victim of inordinate fear. Fear rode him hard with the dark, sinister, and unreasoning apprehension of what might happen. And he lived with this apprehension every minute of every day.

## **The Power of Faith**

Then the young man had the good fortune to marry a clear-minded, religious girl who had no fears whatsoever. He never knew her to be afraid of anything. And the reason she had no fear was that she had a simple and controlling faith that Almighty God would always guide and protect her.

Gradually, over the years, the faith of the wife became increasingly influential in the development of the husband. Presently, he began to see the first ray of hope: Maybe, just maybe, he could at long last escape

from the harsh tyranny of fear of what might happen. Thereafter, he began a lifelong study and practice of the power of faith in God to deliver him from his fear. His was an undeviating search for a mastery of fear and anxiety. He finally accomplished this in the only basic way it can be achieved: namely, learning to have real trusting faith in God's love, care, and guidance.

## **How to Let Go of Your Fear**

Here are four tried and true methods for overcoming the haunting fear of what might happen:

- 1.** Let go and let God. Worry is a spasmodic clutching by the mind of an obsessive fear idea. To counteract it, insert in the mind the thought that you can leave your concerns with God. By a deliberate mental act, take charge of the fear spasm. Order your mind to release its frantic hold on the obsessive anxiety thought. In a word, let go and let God.
- 2.** Remind yourself of one great fact and affirm it constantly: "God loves me and those whom I love. He is now taking care of us all."
- 3.** Having left your fears with God, affirm His watchful care, and go about your daily life confidently.
- 4.** Every day, morning and night, thank God for his loving kindness. Believe and affirm the things for which you are thanking Him.

The daily practice of the above techniques will condition your mind, finally, to let go of the haunting fear of what might happen.

# 4

## Faith Cancels Out Fear

**L**ITTLE did airline hostess Jackie Myers realize, on that beautiful morning as she walked out to the huge waiting jet, that within a few minutes she would face the greatest crisis of her life. After take-off, Jackie suddenly found herself face-to-face with death. At what seemed certain to be her last moment, a remarkable insight came to her. She knew then that the greatest thing she had ever done was to build up a faith that could cancel out fear.

“Eleven minutes after take-off,” Miss Myers says, “our beautiful huge shiny jet went into a nose dive. We were 249,000 pounds hurtling through space. We went into the dive at 19,000 feet and, forty seconds later, the captain pulled us out of it at 5000 feet—just eight seconds before we would have crashed!

“As we pulled out of the dive, the number-three engine tore out of the wing and fell to earth. Number four was hanging on by a few bolts. We lost most of our hydraulic fluid and a lot of electrical power. Several other mechanical failures developed. But our captain landed the plane in an emergency field as gently as one

would handle a newborn baby. If eggs had lined the runway, they would not have been damaged. It was the greatest miracle I shall ever experience.”

Jackie Myers told of the thoughts that crowded her mind in those agonizing 40 seconds during which the plane was in a nose dive. Here was an instance. “When we started to encounter turbulence, I ran to my jump seat in the tail of the plane, but was thrown off balance. I grabbed onto a shelf as we nosed over. At first, I couldn’t believe it was happening. Our pilots were superbly skilled. I felt certain they would pull us out of it.

“But it was an unmistakable fact: we were plunging through space. I thought of a beloved aunt who, every night, says a little prayer for me. I thought how happy I was to have been even a small part of my church. I thought how strongly I had endorsed the power of positive thinking and the Golden Rule. At no time did I experience fear. I was so happy about my life, including religion. I did tell God there were so many things I wanted to do yet. I said ‘Lord, I never got my happy marriage and my happy family.’

“But we were still hurtling downward and I reluctantly terminated my conversation with God. I accepted that we would be blown to bits upon impact. I added a little P.S. to God: ‘If this is the way You want it, Lord I guess this is the way it’s going to be.’” Then suddenly, the plane righted! Jackie could hardly believe her senses. “But it was real. We were flying merrily along on a level!”

Later she told me, “I found in this terrible experi-

ence that by positive thinking and right living from day-to-day, you can develop an inner condition that will sustain you through life's worst ordeals and roughest moments." By practicing faith and right thinking, by praying to God, and by seeking direction from Him, Jackie Myers had built up a resistance against fear so that it could not touch her, even in the worst moment of her life. The build-up of faith against fear is one of the most fundamental methods for controlling anxiety and conquering fear. Faith cancels out fear.

One night, during the Civil War, Gen. Stonewall Jackson was in conference with his generals. He was planning a daring sortie in the Shenandoah Valley. It was a brilliant plan, strategically. The odds were high, but the possibility of success existed. Only a genius could have conceived it and carried it through. At the conclusion of the meeting, one of Jackson's generals said timorously, "But, General Jackson, I fear we can't carry it off." Jackson arose, put his hand on his shoulder, and said, "Never take counsel of your fears, General." Jackson was a man who took counsel not of fear but of faith and faith canceled out fear.

## **A How-To-Do-It Program**

In canceling out fear by faith, the *number one* thing to do is to say, with determination: "I do not want to be motivated by anxiety and fear anymore. I want to cast out fear and anxiety from my mind, and no longer be dominated by them. I now decide—now determine—I now *will*—that my anxiety and fear be brought under

control, even eliminated; and that I become a person of faith.” Of course, saying these things, however strongly, will not in itself accomplish them; but they will be accomplished when you strongly affirm them, when you mean it deeply, and when you do determine to make your decision really stick.

*Step number two:* On a sheet of paper list all of your fears. Determine your worst fear and decide to attack that particular fear alone. I suggest this procedure because your strength no doubt is equal to only one aspect of fear at a time. Conceivably, an attack upon the entire lot of them would be more than you could successfully mount. But if you overcome first one and then another, and another, presently you will gather strength to attack your entire fear pattern.

*A third procedure* is what might be called a spiritual crash program, or a method for increasing faith quickly. In the best sense faith is, of course, the result of a long developing spiritual process. But since we have the practical problem of dealing with fear and just haven't enough faith to counteract it, then we are left with the necessity for building faith up at once.

To do this, I suggest taking large “doses” of faith into your mind. Work at it zealously and constantly, with the purpose of saturating your consciousness with faith. Search for Scripture passages that express the greatest faith men have ever had. Memorize them. Repeat them until they take hold of you, as they will, until they dominate your thinking.

An illustration of the type of text that will be help-

ful in this connection is Psalm 34:4: “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” To say that I sought the Lord means that I really determined to find Him, and this very determination brought me to Him. Then He took *all*, that is *every*, fear from me. Another is Psalm 23:4: “I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.” Get fixed in your mind the presence of God and fear will fade away.

Here’s another: Deuteronomy 33:27, “Underneath are the everlasting arms,” which means your loving Heavenly Father will let no harm come to you.

# 5

## Don't Be Afraid of People

**W**HEN I was a young reporter on the old Detroit *Journal*, my editor, Grove Patterson took a kindly interest in me. He was a man of keen and perceptive insights. One day, he called me into his office. “Norman,” he said, “you’ve got a lot of fear and anxiety. You must get rid of it. What is there to be afraid of? Why should anyone go through life like a scared rabbit? The good Lord has told us that He will help us and be with us.

I shall always remember that conversation. “Look son,” he continued, “I’m going to give you a little advice. The only one in this world to fear is God, and that doesn’t mean to be afraid of Him. It means to esteem Him. There is nothing else to be afraid of, so never be afraid of anything or anyone.”

“But, Mr. Patterson,” I said, “how can anyone possibly go through life afraid of nothing or no one?”

He leveled a long, inky finger at me. “Listen,” he said, “I’ll tell you how: ‘Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid.... for the Lord thy God is with (you) whithersoever (you go)’ (Joshua 1:9). Just hang onto that promise,” he added, “and don’t forget that it’s made by Someone who never let anybody down.”

The world is full of individuals who live miserable lives because fear of other people affects their personal relationships. The employee fears the boss. The diffident person is fearful of assertive types in school or office. Some wives fear their husbands and vice versa, and, there are parents who fear their children. The introvert cowers before the extrovert; the shy person cringes in the presence of the bumptious. Some people do not participate because someone else makes them feel inferior.

## **How May Fear of Other People Be Overcome?**

1. Let the shy help the shy. In every group there are other shy people. You may be surprised to discover who they are; often the loudest talker, for instance,

is covering up his inferiority feelings. Single out a shy person in the group and show him attention. This will help him, and it will help you doubly.

2. Accept yourself. *Be yourself entirely*. You are distinctive, and there is only one of you in existence. This will free you from a slavish simulation of other people. The effort to be like someone else is, in essence, a fear of other people or of being different.
3. Learn to love people. “Perfect love casteth out fear.” The more you *develop genuine appreciation and esteem for others*, the less you will feel inferior in their presence and the easier, more normal, your relationship with them will be.
4. Pray for people with whom you feel uncomfortable. Ask God to help them with their problems—they also have some, you know. In time, they will sense your prayerful regard and like you for it.

## **What Is Your Image of Yourself?**

Emerson once said, “Man surrounds himself with the true image of himself.” You develop around yourself situations and attitudes that are, in large measure, a reflection of the image that you have of yourself. If you respect other people, take them as they are, practice loving them, and deal with them on this basis of facts rather than emotions, they will react to you in normal and friendly fashion. But to embarrassment, shyness, reticence, and withdrawal, people will draw away and become aloof. These reactions denote fear of others and always result in feelings of uneasiness in others.

A young man consulted me about a fear of his boss, a stern, hard man. The young man said, “I feel shaky whenever I go into his office.” I offered the opinion that the boss may have become seemingly stern because of his own problems. I suggested that the young man pray for his employer and think thoughts of friendly affection toward him. “It will be like trying to dent a wall of steel,” he complained.

But when the young employee began to see his boss as a human being, a warm feeling developed between them, and fear passed away. It is a simple law of human relationships: genuine love and friendliness overcome fear of other people.

Freedom from the fear of other people results when you override your own self-consciousness and become fully conscious and aware of other people.

## 6

### **Clean Up Guilt and Watch Fear Wither**

**G**UILT AND FEAR are so inextricably interlocked that, when these two enemies of human happiness gang up, they make life miserable. I urge anyone who suffers from fear or anxiety to face honestly whether guilt is a possible cause and to consider

the necessity for spiritual healing.

Fear is an overwhelming anxiety. Anxiety is related to something we can generally handle by trying to think it through intelligently. If, however, this becomes too great in degree, it develops into fear, which freezes the personality and frantic action often results.

The difference between fear and anxiety may be illustrated in this way. If a big dog barks at you, you may feel anxious and walk faster to avoid it; but if a lion in the street roared at you, your fright would cause you to run in terror. This would be fear.

Some anxiety is normal. It helps us cope with everyday life by the exercise of caution. But abnormal fear, or overwhelming anxiety, is destructive. And one of the most destructive is the fear-anxiety state that results from guilt. It actually is a kind of terror—a running away.

Fear and anxiety often are rooted in childhood. Sometimes parents, however loving and well meaning, project their own fears upon children. Superstitious fears of the human race are thinly covered with a veneer of civilization. Then, too, traumatic experiences in life often activate fears. But the biggest factor in the fear cases that I see is a sense of guilt. It is pretty hard for a sensitive personality to incorporate the foreign element of guilt without hatching a flock of anxieties and fears. It would seem that if we could get rid of all guilt in people's minds, fear would weaken to the point of withering away.

An old friend became a pathetic victim of anxiety in

a dramatic reversal of his personality, which formerly was completely free of unwarranted fear. In our talks, he revealed an enormous sense of guilt based on violation of his moral code, the general abandonment of which was deeply affecting his conscience. He had stimulated deep guilt feelings as a result of living at variance with his convictions of right and wrong. He had discovered that these values ingrained in his consciousness could not be set aside without disastrous disintegration of his personality. Hence he had sprouted a large assortment of anxieties, and these had hardened into chronic fear.

## **The Way To Overcome Guilt**

I recommended several steps to him. *First*, a complete catharsis with a spiritual counselor. By catharsis, I meant he was to empty out of his mind all the evil he had thought about and done, holding nothing back from his counselor. *Second*, he was to ask and to receive God's forgiveness. God forgives quickly and generously. *Third*, he was to forgive himself and no longer condemn or excoriate himself for past sinfulness. Man instinctively believes he must continually punish himself. Self-forgiveness comes hard but is vital. *Fourth*, he was to rebuild his personality on a moral level harmonious with his deepest convictions.

These were difficult, especially self-forgiveness and rebuilding; but all were possible to achieve by real effort and through prayer and faith.

These, then, are the techniques for cleaning up guilt

and watching fear wither: counseling, God's forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and rebuilding. Of course, guilt thoughts must be kept from the mind and action related to such thoughts avoided. So keep your thoughts under control. I reminded my friend of the old saying: "You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair." You may not prevent guilt thoughts from entering your mind, but you can keep them from staying there and taking charge of your actions.

Do all this as best you can, and in direct proportion to how well you do your best your fear will wither. Most people are not fear-dominated persons, and you can become the fearless person God meant you to be.

Branch Rickey, who had a rare talent for making real men of his baseball players, once had a player who almost hysterically rushed into the clubhouse after every inning to telephone his wife. He was neurotically suspicious of his wife's faithfulness, although she was completely trustworthy and loyal.

It turned out that the player was projecting his own disloyalty on her. "You know how it is, when you're on the road with the boys and there is a lot of pressure on you. . ." he lamely told Mr. Rickey.

But Branch had an answer for the miserable young man, "Where are your inner braces? If you really want to go straight, there's Someone who can help you, and you know who He is." Branch Rickey prayed with that player about his fear-morality problem, brought something real into that baseball player's life, and saved his

marriage—and a player, too. The boy stayed on the “reservation” there after and played good ball.

So guilt adds up to fear. When you subtract guilt, fear folds up and fades away.

# 7

## End the Fear of Failure

**M**ORE PEOPLE than might be supposed are deeply troubled by the fear of failure. It is a dangerous fear to have working against you, for it can cause the personality to freeze and therefore induce the very failure you fear.

Everyone is bound to fail at times. The important question is, how do you react? A failure can be an excellent teacher—mistakes teach us how not to do something. Then, too, our successes tell us how something is done right. It is important to seek persistently within both failure and success to discover new insights and know hows. You can bring great accomplishments out of what at first seemed overwhelming failure; but if you permit failure to continue as failure, it will be failure in outcome forever.

When failure occurs, simply do the best you can with it. Never let yourself acquiesce in a continuing fear-of-failure psychology, for that will only reproduce

more failures. The best strategy is to continue striving for better performance until it is attained.

Look at a failure and ask yourself why you failed. Then go back at it again wiser, more competent, and never entertain the thought that you will continue to fail. Such practice strengthens faith in the process of thinking failure out and thinking success in.

The person who is able to control and use his thought processes need never be afraid of failure. W. Clement Stone, who has inspired many to successful living by his books, says, “Think, think, think.” Never give up. You will get an answer, if you keep on thinking without panic, without fear of failure. If you learn to recognize and bypass emotional reactions, and stress cool, rational thinking, you can think your way out of any trouble or ineffective living.

There is no satisfaction in this world quite like overcoming fear of failure. If you prepare for a frontal assault—planning, learning, thinking, studying, working, believing, praying—you have all the ingredients to conquer the plaguing fear of failure in a manner full of joyousness, happiness, and expectation.

## **Don't Be Afraid to Be Afraid**

The secret of courage is honestly to admit to your feelings of failure—then, with God's help, go on and do your job in spite of them. This procedure will keep fear under control and, when controlled, it cannot bother you, for then you are in control of fear.

Maurice Chevalier was the greatest entertainer of

his era. Suddenly one night he felt extremely dizzy. His brain seemed on fire. Cues seemed to reach him from far away. He tried desperately to get back on the track, but his mind was a jumble. His fellow actors covered up for him, but the old debonair ease that was his trademark was gone. He would hesitate and stammer. Failure for the first time in his professional life had come to the great performer.

Ordered to rest, Maurice Chevalier came under the care of Dr. Robert Dubois in the southern part of France. "I am beaten. I'm afraid of being a failure. I have no future," he told the doctor. He was advised to take long walks to repair his damaged nervous system. Yet the inner turmoil did not leave him. He had lost all confidence and he was afraid.

After a time, the doctor suggested he entertain before a small group in the village hall. "But," said Maurice, "I am terrified at the thought. What guarantee is there that my mind will not go blank?"

"There are no guarantees," the doctor said slowly. "But you must not be afraid of failing. You are afraid to step on a stage again, so you tell yourself that you're finished. But fear is never a reason for quitting: it is only an excuse. When a brave man encounters fear. He admits it and goes on despite it."

Maurice suffered untold agony of fear before his appearance but he went on and performed very well. Joy welled up inside him. "I knew that I had not conquered fear. I had simply admitted it and gone on despite it; and the scheme worked."

From that night, Maurice Chevalier performed before audiences everywhere. “There have been many moments of fear,” he said. “The gentle doctor was right; there are no guarantees. But being frightened has never since made me want to quit.” And Maurice added: “My own experience taught me this: If you wait for the perfect moment, when all is safe and assured, it may never arrive. Mountains will not be climbed, races won, or lasting happiness achieved.”

So the way to end the fear of failure is this: First, don’t be afraid to be afraid. Honestly admit your fear. Then act as though you were unafraid. With the help of God, do your job with total neglect of fear. You will make the grade with the Lord’s kindly help.

## 8

### Don’t Fear a Problem— Solve It

**M**ANY PEOPLE seem to believe that this world would be wonderful, if we had fewer problems, less difficult ones, or, better still, none at all. But really, is a problem a bad thing? Would we be better off with no problems whatsoever?

Perhaps I can best answer by trying to recall where it is that no one has problems—and I remember exactly

where it is—the cemetery. There they are, at rest from their labors, and for them life's fitful fever is over. They could care less about health, taxes, or wars. They have no problems; but they are dead.

It follows then that problems are a sign of life. I would even say that the more problems you have, the more alive you are. The individual who has ten good old tough man-sized problems is, on this basis, twice as alive as the poor apathetic character who has only five problems. And if you have no problems at all, I warn you, you are in great jeopardy. The life force must be running low in you; and you had better take it up with God and ask Him, "Please, Lord, don't You trust me anymore? Give me some problems!"

One of the basic and certain facts about life is the inevitability of problems. We might as well face the hard, cold, realistic fact that we are going to have problems until the day we die. The Bible, most realistic of all books, says: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7), and "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33).

This Bible verse also says: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This is what you and I can do. I want to assure you that we need fear no problem on earth but, with God's help, can overcome it, however formidable it may appear to be. So don't fear a problem—solve it.

A psychiatrist is reported to have said, "The chief duty of a human being is to endure life." That seems quite an heroic observation, and there is much truth in

it. There are, of course, certain inevitabilities in this life from which we have no alternatives. They just have to be faced and endured.

My father had arthritis until death at 85 years of age. He told me that it bothered and pained him for years, until he made up his mind that he had it, that there was no real cure for it, and that he would have to live with it. When he had adjusted his thinking to the inevitable facts, the arthritic condition did not annoy him nearly as much. He lived a long, vigorous life, regardless of his arthritic affliction. Actually, in a mental and spiritual sense, he mastered his problem.

## **Master Your Problems**

If the chief duty of a human being were simply to endure life, the prospects would be bleak indeed. A far better concept is to charge ourselves with mastering life. Then we can master our problems.

The secret that I personally worked out for dealing with problems is an uncomplicated one, but it has the virtue of working. Namely, a complete commitment of my problem and myself to God's help and guidance. I found that by practicing, however inexpertly, the teachings of Jesus Christ, I had an increased inner peace and a better ability to organize myself and my thoughts; and that fear, tension, and inadequacy in the face of a problem were brought under control. Here are some suggestions to help you do the same:

## **Seven Ways To Solve a Problem**

- 1.** Remember (Psalm 73:24): “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel.” Ask God for guidance and follow it when it comes. Believe that God will guide you.
- 2.** Don’t panic or you will not be able to think clearly. First, get quiet. How do you do that? Pray to God and relax in faith. Then keep relaxed and calm.
- 3.** Don’t be overwhelmed or make the problem bigger than it is. Simply apply common sense.
- 4.** Don’t spend time on regrets. Don’t ask “Why did I ever get into this?” Begin where you are.
- 5.** Seek a solution, not for the whole problem, but for one step. Take it a step at a time. As you do so, pray continually.
- 6.** Ask yourself what is right and avoid the wrong, for no wrong thing ever turns out right.
- 7.** Never give up. Keep at it. Keep praying. Keep believing. Keep thinking until the answer comes. Remember, the darkest hour is often just before the dawn.

# Prayer When Worried

By Norman Vincent Peale

**D**EAR LORD, I'm worried and full of fear. Anxiety and apprehension fill my mind. Could it be that my love for Thee is weak and imperfect and, as a result, I am plagued by worry?

I have tried to reassure myself that there is nothing to worry about. But such reassurances do not seem to help.

I know that I should just rest myself confidently upon Thy loving care and guidance. But I have been too nervous even to do that.

Touch me, Dear Lord, with Your peace and help my disturbed mind to know that You are God and that I need fear no evil. In Christ's name, I offer this prayer. Amen.

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