

Finding Freedom From Fear and Silencing Self-Doubt

There's a huge fear that many of us wrestle with if we're truly honest.

It's not an outside fear, like being afraid of spiders or heights. It's not a nagging fear like worry. This is a fear that flows out from our insides. Our core identity gets taken over by it. In fact, this fear is so terrifying to us that we just keep it hidden.

It is the fear of rejection. It is the fear that says, "I'm afraid I won't be enough." It's the sinking feeling that you are an imposter and you don't belong. It's the mind-numbing worry that if people really knew what you thought or who you are, you would be rejected by them.

This fear keeps us from living life to the fullest because we're afraid to truly live at all. We shrink back and hold back instead of growing and letting go. We believe that the gifts we have—our art, dreams, strengths—are not important and not valuable. We are constantly making the exhausting choice to be a false impression in order to be accepted by others rather than becoming our authentic selves.

When we struggle with self-doubt and let insecurity call the shots, we're robbing the world of something beautiful. We're stealing away who God created us to be. We're holding back the real person the world needs us to be. So how can we fight this fear and get back on track?

We have to silence self-doubt and set ourselves free to be authentic. We have to come to terms with the fact that we're more awesome than we think we are.

Many of us are terrible at assessing our own abilities.

Researchers found that the more competent and gifted people are at a task, the more likely they are to underestimate their ability. The only ones who were 100 percent sure they were the best were the most incompetent people.

What's the bottom line? We're excellent self-doubters and terrible at noticing the truth about the incredible people we are. We've got to ignore the "I'm not good enough" and start listening for God's voice saying, "I gave you these gifts and abilities on purpose."

When fear starts to whisper lies, here are three simple strategies to tune out the doubts and give a voice to the real you:

1. Watch your words. Pay close attention to the way that you talk about yourself. Phrases like, "I could never," "I'll probably mess it up," or the ever present "I'm sorry," need to be erased from the mixtape repeating over in your mind. In fact, you should just tape it over with messages like "I belong here," "my words matter," "I have something to offer to the world." Make this rule for yourself: If you wouldn't say it to someone you love, don't say it to yourself. Pray that the Holy Spirit keeps a guard on your mouth.

2. Find a small way to break a habit of safety. You cannot grow what you will not risk. That might mean you speak up when you would normally be silent. If your voice shakes, don't stop, because in that moment you're breaking the fear of self-rejection. Share your true feelings when you'd rather hide. Be brave in who you are. Don't let worry, insecurity and self doubt cut you off from who you really are because you were put on Earth on purpose for God's purpose.

3. Change your posture. Literally. Change the way you hold yourself. Author Amy Cuddy has done some amazing research that reveals how just opening up your arms and torso to take up more space for as little as two minutes can actually make you

more positive. It releases testosterone and cortisol to make you feel assertive and able to handle stress. The opposite is also true. When you collapse your body language and close in on yourself, you become more passive and less confident.

When the fear of rejection raises its ugly head, remember God's promise, "I'll be with you." He will not leave you. He is with you always.

So be brave with who you are, knowing the God of the universe created you and has got your back. Stop robbing the world of your voice. Don't take away your gift. Quit holding back the love you have to give. You can conquer the biggest fear of rejection by allowing faith to drive your future. {eoa}

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