

Three Questions for Turning Anxiety into Faith

Fear of failure is a very human feeling. Well, I assume it is human anyway. I can't imagine a dog stressing out over whether her business plan will succeed or a cat worried about whether he will be a good parent.

On this journey called life, some degree of worry is normal. Fears come and go, then come and go again. Anxiety sneaks up and whispers in our ear from time to time, no matter how confident we are in our decisions or how well-laid our plans might be. That is okay. We shouldn't live in fear though. We can't allow anxiety to take up residence in our hearts. We can't be stressed out over being stressed out or worried about our worry or afraid of being fearful—that would only make things worse.

We all know this. If fear and anxiety are no longer occasional visitors but instead constant companions, we will shrink back from the challenges ahead. Our fears will no longer help us be prepared for possible obstacles, which is the positive purpose they serve, but they will be obstacles themselves.

What is the antidote to fear? How do we respond to those whispered thoughts of anxiety that keep us awake at night? We often assume we just need more knowledge and control. If we can somehow remove the uncertainties and foresee all the outcomes, we think then we will be free of fear.

That doesn't work, of course. We aren't God. We can't even see the future, much less control it. We are only human. And being human is good, if we learn to embrace it.

Like many people, I struggle with anxiety and fear—often severe. The struggle has been even more intense since a botched surgery 10 years ago. When diagnosed with a tumor on

my adrenal gland, my surgeon removed my *left* gland when in fact the tumor was on the *right*. This mistake destroyed my health and left me with a lifetime of medical issues that can never be fully resolved and will likely take years off my life. So finding a way to manage it is an ongoing challenge I face.

Recently, I asked my therapist, "What is the opposite of anxiety?"

He replied simply, "Faith."

That gave me a lot of peace. It reminded me that the answer to fear is not to have all the answers or to keep everything under control but rather to trust. To believe. To expect good things to come even when we don't have a tangible guarantee of what will happen.

Faith means knowing that things will work out and that we will succeed. Our success might take longer than we expected and it might look differently than what we imagined. But ultimately if we approach uncertainty with grace and flexibility, things will work out for the best, even if the outcome is not perfect.

I recently launched a new book, *On the Way to Casa Lotus*, as well as a blog, podcast and website. To say that was a lot of work and expense would be an understatement. I've poured my heart and soul into this project because I believe it will help many people. Along the way, fears have tried to stop me. What if I don't succeed? What if the book isn't well received? What if I invest all that time and money for nothing?

That's where faith comes in, as my therapist gently reminded me. Faith looks beneath the surface and sees the heart. It looks past the threats and sees the hope. It looks beyond the risks and celebrates the potential for good. When I remember why I'm doing all of this—to spread the message of forgiveness—my heart settles down. Peace and joy arise. And I

find new strength propelling me forward.

How about you? Are you facing any challenges right now? If so, here are three questions that I ask myself when I need to turn fear into faith:

1. Do I have the right motivations?

Faith means trusting that if we are doing things for the right reasons, everything will fall into place. No, we can't control the future but we can control our motivations and our actions today. Everything else will take care of itself. There is great rest and freedom in focusing on what we can do and leaving the rest up to God.

2. Am I willing to wait?

We are sowing seeds. Eventually the blooms will come and we will enjoy the fruit of our labor. We can't control the timing but we can sow seeds, water them and care for the delicate shoots that peek above the ground. This is about patience and perseverance, no matter how long it takes to see results.

3. What does success mean?

There are many ways of measuring success, and money and recognition are the least important of them all. Think about the results of your efforts. You are spreading love. You are doing good. You are building community. You are serving others. You are encouraging those around you. You are creating teams. You are alleviating pain and suffering. You are promoting healing. You are sharing your blessings. You are finding inner peace. You are releasing past trauma. You are building a better world for your children. Don't settle for a narrow view of success! You are accomplishing far more than you can see on the surface.

If fear of failure has been holding you back, ask yourself this: "How can I turn this fear into faith?" Take a moment to

think about the good you are doing. Remind yourself that the results will be worth the effort and the wait. I believe in you! You are here for a reason, and you will succeed. {eo}

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