

Get Out of Your Way – Overcome Your Fears

Let's be honest. Each of us has someone in our lives that just gets in our way. At just about every turn, when our lives could go one way or another, this individual is there to plant the seed of doubt, to put us on our heels, even if momentarily, or sometimes to dissuade us altogether. The way to get this person out of your life? First realize that you are that person in your life. Now, let's talk about how to change it.

We all battle with fears of some sort. I certainly do. I have for all of my life. Some of those that I can recall are during youth sports as a young lad, when the pressure was on me. Trying out for the JV basketball team in high school. Getting cut from that team, and dealing with fears of trying out again the next year. Fears associated with going off to college. With joining the Air Force. With starting pilot training. With my first assignment. On my first combat mission. In a new marriage. As a new parent. Starting a business. Starting a podcast. And even in how to approach today's topic, and every topic. There is always some level of fear. But guess what...it's normal.

Fear is all around us, and it can be crippling. But it doesn't have to be. It can be empowering, and that's what I want to dig into today, because realizing this, addressing your fears and effectively using your emotions can propel you to new heights. And that's what we're here for, right? To be all that we can be...to bring all of our best selves to this life and to those around us.

Over the past couple of weeks, we've talked about belief in ourselves, being the type of person you want to be and about your true "why" or motivator. But we have to ask the question, "what is it that often keeps us from being that person?" Specifically, what fears do we have...of rebalancing or reworking our priorities? What baggage do we bring from past attempts to live a more balanced and fulfilling life? What past experiences affect our self-efficacy, or belief that we can?

And let's not forget, we also spend a lot of time worrying about what others think too. But no matter how we may think others view us, it's important that we believe in ourselves. We can't let negative self-talk or even negative real talk from others get us down.

What I'm talking about here is your internal dialogue. Many of the things that work against us as we seek to grow are limiting beliefs, negative self-talk, and either real or perceived negativity and doubt from others around us. And sometimes we let these things define our reality. But the truth is that we define our reality, simply by how we think. If we think, "this is how I can" instead of "this is why I can't," we define our reality. And when we define our reality, we can do things to shape that reality. Let me give you a few examples of negative self-talk and limiting beliefs in different areas of our lives. You may say...

- I have too much going on to try to balance it all. It's easier to just stick to the way I'm doing things now, as tough as that is.
- These stressors in my life will never go away.
- You don't understand my situation and how hard it is.
- I've failed at this before

And believe me when I tell you that I've done it too. I still do. Negative self-talk examples in my life have been:

- Who am I to create something? This business. This podcast?
- This is what people who run this type of business do, so I have to do that too. (Not true.)
- These are the things I can talk about on social media and in the content I produce.
- This is what leaders in this role do.

As I've thought about how our fears affect us in our daily lives, I've landed on three broad categories of fear...those things that drive or amplify our internal fears. These are fear of failure, fear of discomfort, and strangely enough, fear of success. So let me briefly address these three fears.

The first, and maybe the most obvious, is a fear of failing. I've certainly been afraid that I wouldn't succeed or that I wouldn't complete something that I set out to do. Because there is risk in trying. There's risk in the attempt. I mean, if there was certainty, it wouldn't necessarily be an attempt. It would just be something that you do. But the fear of failing hits a nerve for many of us, especially when we are less confident in our ability, or when we have doubts about our success. And there's a tendency to feel as though failure at this thing that I'm attempting would just be added to the long list of things that I didn't do or didn't accomplish, thereby reinforcing what some of us think we know about ourselves...that we can't succeed. Fear of failure.

The next type of fear is fear of discomfort. This is the fear of trying or starting something new because it will take us out of our comfort zone. We are creatures of comfort, and intentionally seeking or embracing discomfort goes against our very nature. The reason why we have many of the unhealthy habits and fewer healthier habits is because comfort often trumps the sacrifices needed to grow and improve. It's certainly more comfortable for me to stay in my warm bed in the morning than it is to get up and exercise in the cold. It's more comforting for me to eat ice cream than salad. And for many, it's even more comforting to remain busy than to take time to sit down, reflect and spend time with loved ones. Change is truly hard. It takes us out of our comfort zone. We ask ourselves, "what exactly am I signing myself up for? I'm pretty comfortable now. Why would I change that?" It is this fear of discomfort that creates that strong gravitational pull that works to keep us stagnant...to keep us where we are without moving

forward. And the truth is in just about everything in life, if you're not moving forward, you're actually moving backward because the world is changing around us. Fear of discomfort.

And the final category of fear that I'll mention is fear of success. This sounds strange, I know, but sometimes we're afraid of the uncertainty and commitment that comes with succeeding in our goal. "What if I'm successful at exercising 4-5 times a week? Will I have trouble keeping that up all year, or forever? What if I do well with more veggies in my diet? Will I have to worry about eating like that forever? What if I am able to lose the weight? What's to say I won't gain it back again? How can I be sure? What if I make a commitment to be a better partner to my spouse? A better parent to my children. Stronger in my faith and beliefs...am I ready to sign up for that? This subconscious fear of success holds many of us back, because we're afraid of commitment. That's fear of success.

So, whether it's fear of failure, fear of discomfort or fear of success, it's all fear, right? But here's the thing...in order to change, to improve or to grow, we must embrace our fears...each and every one of them. If you let fear of failure grip you, you'll never try. And if you don't try you certainly won't succeed. And when it comes to fear of success, try to embrace the long-term commitment that comes with being successful by taking it one day at a time. If your goal is to live a better life, that's a long-term goal. The point is to change for the better...for good. Yes, it may mean that you have more of a responsibility to yourself and those you love, but isn't that what you want? And by the way, over time, it actually gets *easier* to maintain.

Regarding our fears of discomfort, I think James Clear, author of Atomic Habits said it best. He said, "Many people delay taking action because they hope to avoid suffering. They keep searching for a path that won't involve tradeoffs. But some form of suffering is always inevitable. The process of taking action is the process of choosing your pain." And while I wouldn't necessarily call it suffering or pain, I certainly agree that discomfort is part of the deal. That's the very reason why change is hard. The classic example of choosing your pain that James Clear mentions is regular exercise now, or dealing with health issues later. Do you want to invest in your marriage now, or invest in counseling later? Do you want to sacrifice to be a more engaged parent now, or try to mend relationships with your children later? So, whether it's fear of failing, fear of success or fear of discomfort that's holding you back, turn and face those fears, and claim the change, the victory that you deserve.

Alright, are we tired of talking about fear yet? How about we talk about strength? I am encouraging you here to get out of your own way. Yes, fears are a part of life, but decisions are also a part of life. Viktor Frankl has said, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." What this means is that you get a vote,

even when your subconscious self, that “self” that lets those fears bubble up, tries to stand in the way of your progress, balance, growth and thriving.

Going back to some of the things that I mentioned that I've

- Who am I to create something? This business. This podcast? Well, I've seen others do it. I saw my father create and run his own business. Who am I not to?
- This is what people who run this type of business do, so I have to do that too. I've learned that I don't have to fit the mold of what society expects. I am my own person. I'm unique. You are too, and the world wants your uniqueness. Oscar Wilde said, “Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.”
- I initially told myself that I had to limit the boundaries of what I could talk about on social media and in the content I produce. But just because TD Fitness started as a personal training service doesn't mean I can only provide fitness advice now. I've learned and grown. TD Fitness has too. I feel comfortable expanding to talk about other areas of health and growth...to include the importance of my faith in my life.
- And finally, I used to tell myself that “this is what leaders in this role do.” But I don't have to be the leaders that I saw. I can take the good that I learned from them, and discard the bad. I seek to be who I am in every opportunity, leadership or otherwise. I don't try to necessarily fit a mold. We're called to fill these roles because of who we are. Trying to be someone I'm not would be disingenuous to who I am and rob those I serve of the freedom to be their selves as well.

So how can we start to develop this mindset of overcoming our fears? How can you look to the future with hope and belief that you can, despite those voices in your head? First, listen for and squash the negative self-talk and limiting beliefs as soon as they pop into your head. Squash that voice in your head that's telling you that you can't do this. Sometimes we don't even give ourselves a fighting chance at success before thoughts about why we can't succeed take over. But that initial belief in our ability to do something, to change something, that very first thought and those thoughts that immediately follow, have a huge impact on the outcome. But the unfortunate reality is that this is where many of us fail...before we even start. We kill our goals, our visions for a better self, our dreams before the thought even has time to develop! But again, our reality is shaped by what we believe.

So, be deliberate about getting out of your way. Make the leap, as I like to say. Courage isn't the absence of fear, it's moving forward *despite* our fears. I've used an example before from the TV game show, Jeopardy. If you want to be successful at the game, you have to ring in before the complete answer actually comes to you and trust that you'll know the answer. If you wait, it's too late...someone else has already buzzed in.

So go ahead. Make the leap. Raise your hand in class before you've fully developed your response. When I started this podcast a few years ago, I didn't come up with 123 ideas for episodes. I made the leap, and now, in episode #123 we're talking about something that we all struggle with. When I set out to complete a 140-mile Ironman triathlon (having never run a full marathon in my life, I might add), I wasn't sure I'd finish. I was scared I'd quit during the race. I feared what others would think of me. But I made the leap, and finished. When our first daughter was born, I wasn't sure I'd be a good father, but now I embrace being a #GirlDad, even though I know I don't always get it right...I leapt. The impossible is possible once we look past our fears. But sometimes we need to pull ourselves along. We do that by making the leap.

I'll be honest...one of the things that I fall back on in my life is my faith when I'm staring fear in the face. There's a saying that says, "God will not protect you from what He can perfect you through." And when I think about that, apprehensions turn into opportunities. Fear turns into a path that was meant to be. And I can better embrace it while knowing that He is in control.

My faith not only comforts me and relieves some of my fears, I'm also better prepared and equipped to handle them through faith. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 6 Verse 11 he writes to "put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the strategies of the devil." I have felt this "armor" if you will time and time again as it has allowed me to step confidently into numerous uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous situations. And I made it through those things, often thriving, because of God. Paul also writes in 2 Timothy, Chapter 1 Verse 7 that "God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, of love, and of self-discipline." This means that God is not about fear. He is about empowering you to live fulfilled. To bring all of yourself into the world, and to thrive. And finally, in his letter to the Philippians, Chapter 4 Verse 6, the Apostle Paul writes, "don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything." I still have fears. Everyday there's something that gives me pause, that causes uncertainty, that makes me apprehensive, or downright scared. But what's also in my life every day, multiple times a day, is prayer. The devil's greatest weapon is fear, but when I trust in God, none of that matters. The author Napoleon Hill wrote and encouraged us to "transform your thoughts from fear to faith." That's not necessarily easy to do, but it is absolutely possible.

So, my parting message to you...your action item, if you will, is to make the leap, despite your fears. Don't wait. Start before you think you're fully ready. This is what we do as leaders. This is what we must do as servants. This is what we must do to live a life in which we bring our full selves to the service of others.

Thanks for listening. Coach T. out!