

DON'T LET YOUR FEARS SCARE THE BOO OUT OF YOU!

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Hey, everyone; it's Halloween week! So, the talk title is "Don't Get the Boo Scared Out of You." I was a little slap happy at my desk the other day. And then the second part is, "We Can Do It!" Because then I realized my costume -- I was going to be Rosie the Riveter, and it says, "We can do it!" Right? So, I thought, "*Fear; overcoming fear -- we can do it!*"

So, that's what we're talking about tonight. We're talking about how we can overcome our fear of the future, of hard things, of feeling like we're not lovable or loved. Overcoming fears of the future so we can stay present to what is; we can stay centered with our breath. We can do hard things. We can do things that challenge us and go on and manifest the life we want to live. We can overcome our fear of not being liked or loved or lovable. We can know our own divine worth. We can offer ourselves love and kindness and grace.

So, we're going to look at these three fears tonight. The future, hard things, and being lovable. And by the end of this talk, we're going to learn that we can do it. Ready? Repeat after me, everybody. Ready? We can do it. Oh, that wasn't loud enough. Ready? *[With congregants]* "*We can do it!*" There you go.

Okay, so jumping into the first fear: how to overcome the future. **FEAR OF THE FUTURE**. Anyone afraid of the future right now? Yeah, a few people. It's interesting times, right? So, there's a lot of anxieties happening. Here's the reminder that the only time we truly have -- the only time we truly have -- is right now: the present moment.

So, if we worry about something in the future, but everything turns out okay, well, then we've just wasted a whole lot of time and energy worrying about something that didn't happen. And if we worry about something about the future, and things do go awry, well, now we've just spent extra time -- even more time -- worrying. more time building up anxiety about something before we had even answers as to how to move forward, the next step to take.

But if we stay present -- which again is all we have; we only have this moment -- then we can stay connected to the truth of our being: Divine presence. And that's where we're going to find peace and overcome fears. Being present.

So, being present IS defined as having your focus, your attention, your thoughts, your feelings all fixed on the task at hand. In "The Revealing Word," which our Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore wrote, he says "*Being present means the awareness of spiritual truth.*" So, when we're being present, we're being present to the goodness, the gifts, the presence of the present moment.

So, how can we become more aware of the gifts of the present moment versus focusing on the worry? Well, I found a new author. His name is Daniel Pink. Maybe some of you know him. And he talks about four habits that can change our mind -- or help actually change our mind -- in reducing negative thinking. Because when we're negative thinking, then usually what happens is we're spiraling into fears, right?

So, he has four habits that can help us reduce our negative thinking that turn into fear usually. So, the first habit is the "**no complaining rule.**" He says, "*Complaining doesn't solve; it just continues that feeling of helplessness.*" And he says: "*Try 24 hours without complaining.*"

Now, maybe some of you ... I've done that book, "A Complaint-Free World" by Will Bowen. Anyone read that or have done that? That's a good, okay, then we'll have to do that next year. It's 21 days. It's a 21-day challenge to go complaint-free, and that includes the complaints in your head. It includes the complaints about yourself, whether that's out loud or in your head. Twenty-one days. You get a bracelet. As soon as you complain, you put it on the other wrist and it's supposed to stay there for 21 days. I got about 24 hours when I tried it. My husband's a go-getter, though. He did the 21 days. So, yeah; it's a

great ... So 24 ... Because again, if we keep complaining, it's not solving anything. It's just keeping us in the room and ruminating in the helplessness.

Daniel Pink's second habit as far as reducing our negative thinking and therefore our fears is to **end the "what-if" spiral**. *"What if? What if this happens? What if it all goes awry?"* He says that this is your brain's protection mode, and your brain will keep supplying answers for hours. So, I personally would say: when you start to notice yourself in that spiral – *"What if? What if? What if?"* -- calmly reminding yourself, *"Okay, my brain is trying to protect me."* But then he says, instead ask *"And what if it works out? And what if I'm okay?"*

The third habit to reduce negative thinking, he says, is **the 10-second rule**. So, when you get a negative thought or a worry starts to come up, you start to get afraid of something, you start to get all worked up, he says to ask yourself: *"Does this deserve my attention?"* And if it does, you give it 10 seconds. Because when you don't feed the thought, it loses power. He says if it doesn't leave, then write it down. Train your brain, he says, to process the thought and move along.

And there was a study out of University of Texas-Austin in which they found that, if you do have something that you're really working on -- that's really got you negative thinking, worrying, lots of fear -- to write. Take 15, 20 minutes -- put a timer on 15, 20 minutes -- and write it for three to four days in a row. And what they found was that, by writing about the worry, it resulted in less doctor visits and a score of better happiness, a better mood. So, let yourself get it out. Again, we're just not going to live there and live in it.

And then the fourth habit that he has for reducing our negative thoughts that turn into fears and worries: he says **stop rehearsing disaster**. Anyone else? Yeah. He says this keeps us imagining the worst and trains our nervous system to expect the worst. He says, instead ask: *"How do I handle this? What's the next step?"* Or, *"How can I move forward?"*

And so, I would also add to his list. So, there's those four habits. And I would also say that, when feeling anxious about the future or a future situation, **connect with a close friend**. Brené Brown, one of my favorite authors, says being present to another person reminds us that we're not alone in our humanness. We need each other.

So again: connect, but don't wind each other up. Instead, choose a person who is going to help keep you calm; who's going to remind you to breathe; who's going to focus on the gifts of the present moment. Or what is the next small little action step you can take?

This last weekend, I was having a little health challenge that popped up, and my husband, Juan, just calmly said, *"You're causing yourself to start to panic. Be here now; take a breath. And now what's the next step? What do you need to do? What's the next step?"*

And see, and that's Daniel Pink's fourth habit: really allowing yourself to be in that present moment and ask: *"Okay, and how can I move forward? How can I handle this? What can I do about this right now in this moment?"* And maybe there's nothing, and so I write it down for 15 minutes. Or maybe there's one small step, and maybe that small step is connecting with someone else.

And I know in the past, other actions that have helped me stay present and not spiral in fear have been to actually get yourself to touch something. The grass under my feet. I know there's not a lot of grass here in Phoenix. I've got a big backyard if anyone needs some grass. I've got some grass under my feet. Or your dog; your cat. A soft blanket. Aromatherapy; a smell. You know, something that allows you to ... We know aromatherapy helps change our moods, too. So, anything that's going to bring you back to grounding yourself within yourself; to presence. Bring yourself back to that present moment; to ground yourself in that present moment.

And, of course, my last suggestion for not letting fear overcome you -- which I have shared with you before -- is to ask yourself: "What time is it? Now. What time is it? Now. And what time is it? Now. Right. It's just right now.

So, the key to overcoming our fear of what may or may not happen in the future is to stay present to your thoughts, to your responses, to what's happening in that present moment. Eckhart Tolle -- the author who wrote "The Power of Now" -- says, *"Your entire life only happens in this moment. The present moment is life itself. That's all we have: this present moment."*

So, when the fear of the future starts to get a hold of us, we move to really becoming aware of that present moment. We don't hold on to the negative or doomsday thoughts. We don't allow those thoughts to spiral out of control. Instead, we take a breath. We anchor ourselves to that present moment. We ask: *"Okay, and what if it works out? And what is my next best step moving forward?"*

Because we can overcome our fear of the future. We can do it! Ready to say it with me? We can do it! Together: [with congregants] *"We can do it."* That's right.

Okay, next fear: our **FEAR OF OVERCOMING CHALLENGING SITUATIONS** or maybe a goal that we may have set for ourselves.

So, first we have to look at: why do we have a fear of challenging situations or a goal that we've set? Well, usually it's a fear of failure; of things not working out; or of not living up to our own standards. So, therefore, the fear is really based in the meaning that we've given to not accomplishing the challenge or the goal. And we tie our self-worth and our identity into failure.

And I've even seen this for decades now, being in Unity. We even tie our self-worth/identity to this idea of like, *"Well, if it doesn't work out, well, I must not be a good Unity student. Or I must not meditate very well."* We tend to tie our identity to failure.

But the reality is: there is no failure. There's only information. If you fail or don't accomplish the goal, then maybe really you're being redirected to something else. Or maybe there's an opportunity to reflect on how you can grow into what it is you're trying to accomplish. Or perhaps it's an opportunity to just get really quiet and listen to your soul and what it's telling you is the next best step forward.

Our fear of failure and not succeeding stems usually from our childhood. So, it's also an opportunity to reparent ourselves with the information we have now as adults. So, as kids, we may have gotten the message that we're only loved if we succeed. Or we're only loved if we really do well. Or maybe we were shamed for making a mistake. Maybe we were punished harshly for making a mistake.

Again, no blame here, but just to notice that -- because now you have this idea, or this opportunity, rather, to really reparent yourself and say -- *"Hey, what does that little girl or little boy within me need to hear in this moment? What would comfort me in this moment?"* It's okay to make mistakes. Or, this mistake, or not accomplishing this, doesn't mean I'm worth less or more. Whatever the message is ... But to just really get yourself in touch with that child within you.

Recent research has found that, when you believe things are always working out for you -- even when they don't appear to be -- there's a greater likelihood of things working out. Isn't that interesting? When you believe things are always working out for you, there's a greater likelihood of things working out. It's true that the belief that life is conspiring in your favor actually improves the odds of success. Now why would that be? Because you're rewiring your brain to look for reasons and opportunities on how things will work out.

And also, psychologists have found that the best way to overcome the fear of failure is to first avoid trying to cover it up with a positive pep talk, but instead acknowledge the feelings that are there. *"I'm afraid,"* or *"I'm feeling ashamed,"* or whatever that is ... But just to say, *"Hey, I see you; I feel you."* And then separate the performance from the identity. You aren't that.

And that's where our spiritual teachings come in. To return to the truth of who you are: an expression of Divine Life, an expression of God itself. You're a manifestation of an Intelligent Universe.

And then having that growth mindset, you know: *"What can I learn from this?"* And then reframing it: *"What's the worst that can happen? Or how likely is that? Can I cope if that happens? Will it matter in five years?"* And refocusing on: *"And is it mine to do?"*

And if your soul is really speaking to you and saying, *"Yes, this is mine to do,"* well then keep your eyes on the prize. Use your spiritual power -- your spiritual attribute of imagination -- to imagine/visualize what it is you'd like that goal accomplished to look like and feel like for you. And then expect that things will work out.

You attract what you claim. Not what you're wanting/begging for, but you attract what you claim.

Bob Proctor once said, *"All the energy in the universe is evenly present in all places at the same time. We don't get energy, we release energy. And the triggering mechanism to release energy is desire. When you have a strong desire to do something, you will always have the energy to do it."*

In other words: if it's yours to do, it's yours to do, so do it. You will find a way. Don't let your own thoughts weigh you down or hold you back from moving forward. Setbacks give us more information. Failure gives us more information.

So, I know I've shared this before, but Thomas Edison -- it took him over a thousand tries to make a working light bulb. But what if he was afraid of trying in the first place? Either we wouldn't have light bulbs or we'd be talking about someone else, right? Yeah. And what if he was so afraid of failure that he gave up on the 500th time? And what if he was so afraid that people -- what people were thinking about all of his other failures -- that he gave up on the 999th time?

So, if it's your idea, if it's your goal, then it's your idea: that divine idea that's come to you. Don't let your monkey mind stop you. As creative living beings, we're always wanting to create and express more of life. So, don't let your fear get in the way of expressing what's yours to express. Don't let your fear scare you into hiding or freezing up.

Our third Unity principle states: *"Our thoughts have created power to influence events and determine our experiences."* So, you determine. You determine whether or not you're going to let fear get in the way of obtaining the goals and the dreams that you have.

And with life challenges, you have that strength and resilience within you. Those spiritual qualities are there. Remember all the other times that you've overcome a challenge in your life. Every single person in this room has overcome a challenge in their life. I know that. You did it, and you're capable. You have a faith, a strength within you that you can tap into that will carry you forward.

So yes, you can overcome challenges before you by employing your spiritual tools of visualization, affirmations, meditation, self-reflection and awareness. And then know that you can do it. We can overcome our fear of failure.

We can do it! Together: [with congregants] *"We can do it."* Yes, we can.

Our last fear, to not get the boo scared out of us: **OUR FEAR OF BEING LIKED OR LOVED OR LOVABLE.**

In an article I found on scienceinsights.org, they said one of the most striking findings in relationship research is that people with low self-esteem consistently underestimate how much their partners love them. How much their partners love them! I thought that was so interesting.

And now, again, that's about our low self-esteem. And there's lots of articles on why someone has low self-esteem. Usually it has to do with our attachment with a parent, a guardian. There's also articles about why we want people to like us. Again, it usually stems from levels of attachment with our parent or caregivers.

Of course, more people right now, I feel, are feeling lonely because we're more and more on our devices or in our homes, and we're not connecting in person with one another as much as we used to. And spiritually, I think that we have forgotten that we're all connected. That we're all expressions of this same God source.

And so community and support are so important in helping us overcome feelings of loneliness or like we're not worthy of friendship or connection. And just at this church, alone, we offer lots of ways for that community and support. We have our Circle study groups. We have classes. You can volunteer. We have small interest groups, "Out & About" activities. So, there's lots of ways to connect.

And also, we meditate, right? The meditation helps us to remember our connection to a larger Presence than ourselves that also, again, is that same energy that connects us to all living beings.

Often feeling unloved can stem from a lack of self-love. So, cultivating self-acceptance and compassion is essential in overcoming those feelings. So doing a little self-reflection. Are you someone that you would want to hang out with? Are you someone you'd want to be friends with? Now if the answer is no, I would say: Are you being really uber-critical of yourself? And if it's still no, then maybe what do I need to do to change to be a person I would like to hang out with?

And how can you show yourself more compassion? And more grace, and more kindness? How can you treat yourself like you would a friend? How can you be your own friend first?

So, embracing spiritual practices, seeking connection, can transform feelings of feeling like you're unloved into a deeper understanding of our own self-worth ... of your understanding of the inherent love that you already have within you. That's part of your soul's makeup.

So, the reminder that, as an expression of the Divine, you have all the same qualities. You have the same qualities as God. Therefore, you are love. So step into that spiritual power: that gift of love. If you want to experience more friendships or love, then be that. Again, you don't attract what you want. You attract what you claim. So, claim: *"I am worthy of love. I am worthy of healthy, kind friendships."*

Be softer with yourself. Love, kindness -- that softens the fear that we may be holding. And as you soften into that feeling, that energy -- more into love and kindness -- well, that's what you walk around with. And people notice. You've noticed, right? *"Gosh, that person has such a good vibe! Gosh, that person's sunshine! Gosh, he's such a gentle, kind human being."* And then you attract more of that into your life.

So, by putting more of what you want to experience out into the world, it finds you. You find it. It's just like a magnet.

So author and podcaster Vex King, he said, *"Think the waiter was friendly? Tell them. Your friend looked good today? Tell them. Someone's work inspired you? Tell them. The world is loud with criticism and quiet with appreciation. Be the exception. It could make someone's day."*

And I would say it could make your day. And win you more friends. Win you more connections. Because as they see you being -- and feeling you being -- more love and kindness in the world, well, they're going to want to experience what you have to offer.

So, with that fear of not being liked or loved, again: focusing on your spiritual identity as a loving being. And then claim it. Be it. Share it.

So, we can overcome our fear of not being loved. We can do it! Ready? [With congregants:] *"We can do it!"* Yes, we can!

There's a lot of reasons we can be scared. I just took about the top three I could think of right now. But to make sure we don't let our fears scare us and get in the way of living our life, to remember that you can acknowledge what's wrong with the world, what's maybe not going great with your life, but yet, you can still choose to be part of what is going right in the world. You can still choose to be a part of what's still going right in your life.

So, instead of placing too much time on what's wrong -- on the fear, the anxiety, the worry -- instead focusing on what you can do to make things better. Don't let your fear have you experiencing that deer in the headlights. Or being frozen in the moment.

But instead, to really breathe into the present moment. Ask yourself: What can I do in this moment? And then move forward. Keep moving that life flow forward. Remember the divine life force and presence that you are, and know that you have spiritual practices that can help you overcome your fears.

We don't have to let our fears run our lives. We can return to the present moment, learn from the challenges, and remember that our divine identity is rooted in love. We can be a light in the world. We can do it!

So, one more time after me. Ready, everyone? [With congregants:] *"We can do it!"* Yes, you can.

Happy Halloween week, everyone. Blessings!

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