

## MINDFULLY GROUNDING YOURSELF IN ESSENTIAL LIFE

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF FEAR

At the moment, things are changing so rapidly, and fear-filled news is so constantly pulling at your attention, it is important to be proactive to stay as positive and out of fear as possible, for a number of reasons.

Fear is not a bad thing. It was designed by our biology to keep us safe in true emergency situations. But because of the way our biology activates fear in our bodies, it becomes a problem if sustained for long periods of time, as is happening in our culture right now.

Fear was designed by our biological nature to not last for more than 20 minutes, for in that time, according to our biological ancestry, we are either being eaten or have escaped being eaten, and in either case, the emergency is over.

If fear persists for more than 20 minutes, there is tissue damage that must be repaired. If we don't get adequate rest and rejuvenation every day, any tissue damage that has accumulated may not get fully repaired, and if accumulated long enough may lead to chronic illness. It is my opinion that most chronic illness is a result of this type of unrepaired tissue damage that occurred because of our stressful lifestyles.

There are other reasons why we want to limit the time duration of fear. When we're fearful, the biological fear response shuts off all non-essential systems, which unfortunately includes the thinking mind. That's why it's hard to "think straight" when your mind is full of fear.

### HOW THE LIZARD BRAIN THINKS

That's because the biological fear response, called the "fight-or-flight" response, goes back evolutionary-wise to the lizards. It's a primitive part of the brain, sometimes called "the lizard brain" for that reason, that is at the top of the spinal cord below the main part of our brain.

The lizard brain is physically very small in lizards, and also in us. Lizards didn't have to "think" rationally about things, so they didn't have a rational brain to do that with. And their much-smaller non-rational brains only had a split-second to react when a danger was present, so that part of our brains, that has stuck around

because of our evolutionary history, reacts in a split second without thinking through anything.

It is programmed to decide in that split second as to whether the given situation is a danger or not, and if it decides the current situation is a danger, it only has three options, “fight,” “flight,” or “freeze.”

So no matter which one of those three options it picks, all of which involve violent physical responses to a violent external threat, it shuts off all bodily systems not necessary for a violent physical response.

It shuts off your gastro-intestinal system, which is why fear makes you not hungry, and prolonged fear can give you an upset stomach or an irritable bowel or even worse.

It shuts off the reproductive system, which is why it's more difficult for women to conceive when they're in chronic fear.

It rebalances the endocrine system for temporary increases in blood sugar and cortisol, which is useful if you're taking violent action, but if sustained can lead to diabetes and other stress-related hormonal imbalances.

It causes the muscles to be taut for instantaneous life-saving movement, which if sustained can lead to chronic muscle tension problems. This includes the TMS (Tension Myositis Syndrome) documented by Dr. John Sarno, which seems to have caused many cases of intractable chronic pain not relieved by other medical procedures, that I have seen be relieved so many times by mind/body techniques.

It causes the neuro-peptides that drive our moods to be oriented towards fear and anger, both life-saving in a real emergency. However, if this hormonal response is sustained over time, it leads to the psychological problems of alienation of others (outwardly directed fear), anxiety (inwardly directed fear), abuse of others (outwardly directed anger), and depression (inwardly directed anger).

#### SHUTTING DOWN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

And last but definitely not least, because the immune system is hormone driven, your immune response shuts off when fight-or-flight is activated, because you

don't need your immune system when your only option seems to be being eaten or escaping being eaten.

That's why people often get colds a day or so after having had an upsetting interaction with someone else, because the upset feelings tanked the immune system and whatever virus was around at the time was now enabled to obtain a foothold.

But when the enemy is an invisible virus you can't even see, if fear is your primary response, you have to be afraid of everyone and everything, and this fear shuts off your immune system, and having your immune system turned off because of your fear makes you distinctly more susceptible to a viral infection.

So now there is a "catch-22," the fear that is supposed to keep us safe has just made us more susceptible to the very thing the fear is supposed to protect us from, the infectious illness.

#### HOW THE TUNNEL VISION OF FEAR GETS US IN TROUBLE

And as if all of that weren't enough, fear itself is a biologically designed over-reaction, giving us tunnel vision and 110% of our resources in a life-saving blast of energy and strength. But the over-reactive 110% part means this life-saving physical effort cannot be sustained over time without damage to our physical mechanism. And the tunnel vision part means we make poor decisions because we're so focused on what seems to be wrong, that we're not paying attention to all the data.

So the bottom line is that we have hormone-based overreactions when we're afraid and angry, and these fearful and angry reactions to life situations are not reality-based, because we have tunneled our vision so far down that we're paying attention to only a small amount of the available data.

This is the cause of all domestic, national, and international violence. For example, we band together in angry mobs and decide that it's ok to kill, hurt, or destroy anybody on the other side of an imaginary line in the sand called an international border or other imaginary boundary between us and the "villanous other."

The bottom line is that when you're chronically fearful, you're not only killing your body (because you're using up energy so fast that your body is dying faster than it's living), but this "us versus them" tunnel vision means that you're making bad decisions, and in the process damaging relationships with those important to you.

Have you ever said to yourself after you just had a conflict with someone, "What was I thinking, why did I say that, I wish I hadn't overreacted that way." That's because the hormones released during anger and fear distort your perception into such a starkly polarized point of view, that everyone outside of your small circle of love has become the enemy. You feel justified in hurting, killing, destroying, or otherwise doing great damage to the "other" in the cause of preserving your own skin.

You can even become angry at your partner or children, turn them into the "other" in a moment of fear or anger, and take an action that damages the relationship with those we love, such as an argument or worse, spousal or child abuse.

So when we're dealing with an international emergency, and the only options seem to be how fearful we become today, and everybody else in the world has now become the enemy because they might be the one that makes you or someone in your circle of loved ones sick, how in the world do you stay sane, loving, and meditative?

#### THE NECESSITY OF STAYING SANE, LOVING, AND MEDITATIVE

If we are going to survive as a human race, we are ultimately going to have to forego violence and stay sane, loving and meditative.

Let me be clear, that does not preclude being cautious, prudent, preventative and wise, when necessary. For caution, prudence, prevention, and wisdom are hallmarks of the person who is not fearful but instead has a meditative thoughtful approach to live.

The difference is that when we're cautious, prudent, preventative, and wise, we have eliminated the "overreactive" part of our thinking, the hormone driven overreaction that leads to violence, such as fighting over resources.

## THE TRANCE OF SCARCITY

Because when we're upset, caught in fear and anger, we are programmed by biology through a lens that sees "not enough", a "trance of scarcity." So we go to the store and buy too much toilet paper because our fear makes us over-react by playing mental movies of running out.

When a lot of people do that at the same time, it causes an artificial scarcity of resources and can even lead to violence, such as recent episodes of people taking items from other people's shopping carts. More sinisterly, there has been an explosion of buying guns over the last few weeks, with gun dealers reporting selling hundreds of guns more than usual.

Under the influence of this trance of scarcity, we can justify abusing the earth and its inhabitants, polluting, hoarding, and otherwise making poor decisions that do not solve the problem, they make it worse. An example would be those who have engaged in price gouging in recent days, such as those in the news who bought up resources like hand sanitizer to create an artificial shortage, and then attempted to sell it back to others at inflated prices.

This is all "fight-or-flight response" at work. Luckily, we also have another physical system we can activate instead, called "the relaxation response." All meditative systems have as their focus the achievement of this response, which is a hormonally based experience of peace, harmony, joy, and bonding with others, in our families, our communities, and in our larger world.

## LIVING FROM THE WISE PART OF YOURSELF

And all of this is, luckily, in a continuum. So that even if something in the news rattles us, so we're momentarily upset, and therefore in fight-or-flight, we don't have to stay that way. As soon as we remember that we can meditate and calm ourselves down, we can begin moving back in that direction, and go back to living in a loving way, with a healthy dose of caution, prudence, prevention and wisdom to keep us safe.

Living from the wise part of ourselves is vastly different from living from the fearful part of ourselves. The wise part of ourselves takes the wellbeing of all other beings into account, including the animal and vegetable world, and the earth itself which is our home.

To do this, we have to ground ourselves in essential life, the true nature of life when stripped bare of fear and anger and instead seen through the loving eyes of someone who is relaxed and in touch with the essential nature of life.

#### MINDFUL GROUNDING IN ESSENTIAL LIFE

Mindfulness is an important tool for keeping yourself grounded in essential life. Essential life is that part of our life experience that is most essential, that is, most closely linked to our experience of life.

When we get tuned into essential life, our perception of life changes dramatically, moving from fear to faith, from pain to peace, from grasping to giving, and from fighting to loving.

And the end result is a profoundly peaceful place, called in scripture “that peace that passeth understanding,” and experienced as a feeling of peace that feels like it has no beginning and no end.

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF ESSENTIAL LIFE

In this frame of mind, our bodies are relaxed, our minds are at peace, we don't have to do anything right now except enjoy this profoundly peaceful place. And any action we need to take feels peaceful to do, and the outcome feels peaceful and positive.

That action starts in peaceful thoughts and ends in peaceful activity that harms no one and increases the amount of peace in the world. It feels good to do it, and it feels even better afterwards, as we contemplate the increased joy in our own little corner of the world, that has been created by what we have done.

And the good news is that even if we started out in an upset place, we can make this emotional shift in just a few minutes, just by doing a few meditative actions in a specific order.

#### THIS IS A SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE

That's right, this universe is filled with Spirit, there is a living, loving Infinite Intelligence that permeates all of creation, which in Scripture is called “omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent.”

Traditionally, our connection to this living, loving energy was called God, the Holy Spirit, or the Awareness of the Presence. In modern times, we call it by other names as well, “the experience of a higher power” or “my intuition” or “my wisest self” or “myself at my best” or “what I’m like when I’m in the zone.”

When you’re in fight-or-flight, this being a spiritual universe is the farthest thing from your mind. Fight-or-flight is such a biologically primitive response, that like the lizards we’ve evolved from, you can’t feel anything spiritual. Instead, you’re filled with the need to hurt, kill, or destroy in order to maintain your health and wellbeing, or at the very least to run away, as far away as possible, from the feared thing.

So “grounding in essential life” is the opposite process, of regrounding yourself to the perception that this is a spiritual universe, getting in contact with that spiritual energy, dropping into peace, and contacting your inner wisdom as to what is the wisest and most peaceful way to navigate the next period of time.

## GROUNDING IN ESSENTIAL LIFE – A MINDFULNESS EXPERIENCE

Today I am teaching a specific technique called “Grounding In Essential Life.” It is a meditative process that is easy to learn and practice, and it feels good to do it.

The following steps may not sound like much, but to actually take the few minutes required to do them will profoundly change your experience, especially if you started off upset about something, and at the end are once again grounded, peaceful, loving, and listening to your wise self

Do the following steps mindfully in the order presented. If you find yourself distracted, just go back to step 1 and go through the chain of events again, as many times as necessary, until you find yourself becoming as peaceful as you have time to experience.

- 1) Becoming present in the location where you are
- 2) Becoming present in your physical body
- 3) Becoming present where you are in time
- 4) Becoming present where you are in space
- 5) Becoming present with your breath
- 6) Becoming present in the experience of life itself
- 7) Becoming present in the goodness of Essential Life
- 8) Becoming present in the knowledge you are part of Essential Life
- 9) Becoming present with your intention for the next period of time
- 10) Becoming present with your intuition as to the outcome
- 11) Becoming present while moving into peaceful inspired action