



Think a job search is scary? It can be a lot like walking on hot coals. Either way, you have to master fear to reach your goals.

The purpose of many “Fear Based” seminars is not to make fear disappear but to teach you to change the way you think about your fears. Seminars like “walking on hot coals” to overcome fear have gained popularity.

(Note to Reader: The Frey Consulting Group does not endorse this practice – however, the illustration of the point being made is valid.)

According to Larry Levine, believing you can’t do something keeps you from trying — and very often from succeeding. I was able to overcome whatever fear I had by reminding myself that the worst that might happen to me (a slight burn akin to what I experience when walking to the water across a hot sandy beach) wasn’t really that bad. Viewed in that light, it wasn’t hard to take that first step.

Of course, once you step onto the hot coals, you don’t stop until you have successfully accomplished what you had set out to do. And that’s really the point of the exercise. The seminar wasn’t about breaking boards or walking on hot coals, but about recognizing that **fear is a state of mind that holds you back from achieving things that are not nearly as hard as they seem.**

Fear holds people back in their careers.

When someone gets laid off, he may behave like a deer caught in headlights. Fear immobilizes him. Even after he calms down enough to begin his job search, he is so afraid of not finding a job that he appears desperate. The more desperate the job seeker seems, the less attractive he becomes as a candidate, seriously hurting his chances of finding employment.

According to Denver career coach Ayn Fox, “One of the underlying causes of fear in the job process is that you will fail, be rejected and made to feel incompetent and worthless. This comes from a way of thinking that if you don’t get the job, it is about you.” To help overcome those fears, she offers the following tips:

1. **Don’t personalize rejection.** Recognize that when you don’t get an offer, it is not necessarily about you. The employer may have someone else in mind or some skill, experience or quality she thinks is important that you may not have.
2. **Be flexible.** Think of the job search as exploring where you might be a good fit rather than selling yourself.
3. **Don’t judge your abilities.** Treat each interview as research about the profession you are seeking that will help you whether or not you get this specific job.

Realizing that each rejection moves you closer to the job you want will inspire you to get out there to collect more rejections faster.

Kathryn Tristan, author of “Anxiety Rescue — Simple Strategies to Stop Fear from Ruling Your Life,” describes one of her clients who lost two jobs in four years to downsizing. The experience left her client anxious and fearful. Because the woman was having trouble finding a job, she became anxious during interviews. Her anxiety in turn reduced her chances of getting a job.

There were **two things** the job seeker needed to do, according to Tristan:

- First, get back in the saddle and continue applying for employment and
- second, overcome the growing fear she had about the interview process.

What her client needed was an “outlook makeover.”

Instead of fearing the worst, she needed to be aware of her negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones. Some people say they will believe it when they see it. Actually, the opposite is true : Once you believe something is possible, it *can* and *will* happen. Tristan coached her client to picture in her mind an interview setting where she felt comfortable and in control. Not only did her client get an interview, she got the job.

Fear is normal, and it can be healthy. It keeps you from doing stupid things. It can cause you to prepare better. Harnessed properly, the nervous energy and adrenaline it produces can improve performance. When fear keeps you from doing the right things, however, you need to learn to deal with those feelings differently.

Because fear is internal, it needs to be addressed internally.

How we see our situations, our capabilities and our future are all choices we make every day. Our thoughts create our lives. You need to choose the thoughts you want to focus on.

When it comes to changing jobs, fear often holds people back as well. It may prompt people to pass up opportunities for advancement or stay at jobs where they are miserable .

Eileen Lambert, associate director of human resources for Verizon Wireless’ New York Metro region based in Warren, N.J., tells a story about a Verizon employee working in operations who Lambert thought would be exceptional in sales. He resisted the idea because he was scared about the uncertainties of working on commission. Eileen put him in touch with successful sales people who had made that same transition, and they gave him the courage to give it a try. He now is a successful salesperson and laughs about how hesitant he was to make the change. Eileen advises taking a chance on a new type of job, if the opportunity is a good one. Paraphrasing hockey great Wayne Gretzky, **you miss 100 percent of the chances you never take.**

There is something to get out of every experience, whether it's successful or not.

What I learned at the "Fear in Action" seminar applies to facing fear in the job market.

"Expect the best, but prepare for the worst," instructor Levine said.

When it comes to facing our fears, we would do well to heed his advice: **"Fear is the feeling people create when they wish what 'is' was different."**

“You need not like a situation; you just need to accept that it exists. Anxiety goes away when you accept the situation that exists. From there, you can take action to change it more to your liking.”

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