

Facing Your Fears Is Powerful

“The oldest and strongest emotion of humankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is the fear of the unknown.”

– H.P. Lovecraft

Entrepreneurism is always filled with uncertainty, and uncertainty fosters fear.

We’re born with the instinct to avoid fear. Evolutionarily, that instinct served us well—it helped us avoid danger and survive; however, for the most part, we don't need that fear the way we once did.

When your fear emanates from uncertainty, walk toward it rather than away from it; something positive may result from doing so. You may discover a new opportunity, a new side of yourself, or gain confidence from facing your fear.

Move Toward the Fear

Moving toward fear is often the only way to grow your business and yourself. Mona Bijoor¹ talks about fear as a beacon and an opportunity. Visualizing fear as a beacon can reframe it from a deterrent to an observation. For instance, the lighthouse beacon that warns us of crashing into rocks can be pictured as guiding us to safety.

To move toward your fear, first understand what is scary. Be specific and objective. Move past the emotion to decipher what could realistically happen.

What’s the Worst That Can Happen?

Break down that question by asking “how,” “why,” and “what’s next.” Sometimes, just writing these observations makes the fear immediately seem much less daunting. Talk with trusted family, friends, mentors, and peers willing to be candid and offer perspective with support.

Review your concerns and, if they’re justified, plan how to mitigate them. Focus on what success you could gain by getting past your fear and use that as motivation.

Visualize Failure

It's harsh, but unbelievably valuable, to face your worst fear: the failure of your business. Imagine that everything you built is gone.

Now, imagine you have unlimited resources to rebuild. Describe this redesigned company. What would you value? Who would you bring in to help? Take notes freely, quickly, and without judgment.

Compare those notes of a rebuilt business to your current company and determine how to move closer to the imagined company.

Follow this process:

- List all the steps between now and the future company.
- Keep dividing those steps into smaller, clearly defined tasks.
- Ask others—team, advisors, and friends—how to accomplish any task that is not clear to you.
- Identify a few steps to begin now.
- Track your progress along the way and adjust as needed.

Facing your worst fears focuses your energy on what truly matters and allows you to visualize success.

Key Takeaway: Most incredible leaders face fear often. To move forward, they stare directly at their fears, respond quickly and fully, and learn from their experiences.

¹ See the book **Startups and Downs** by Mona Bijoor for more information.