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Book Summary



Fear Less

Face Not-Good-Enough to Replace Your Doubts, Achieve Your Goals, and Unlock Your Success

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Key Takeaways

- *Fear isn't just in your head.* Many of your fears are absorbed from your cultural environment.
- *Fear can keep you stuck in an unfulfilling life.* To create a deep, meaningful life, you must be unafraid to reject the conventional Western idea of “winning” and find your own definition of success.
- *Not-good-enough fears can influence your behavior in unexpected ways.* The unconscious fears that you're not good enough or lovable enough often manifest as jealousy, perfectionism, judgmentalism, and separating from others.

• *Fear doesn't disappear on its own—you must name it, face it, and*
 English *face it.* Identify what you're afraid of, assess how it has affected

you, and then deliberately change your response to it.

Overview

Most people don't realize it, but fear is their behavioral GPS. In **Fear Less**, psychologist Dr. Pippa Grange provides techniques to liberate you from both the fears that hold you back and the anxiety-based behaviors they generate, which include jealousy, perfectionism, isolationism, and being judgmental. By using her three-step framework, you can replace your fears with healthier beliefs and start pursuing a life that's meaningful to you.

Part I: Fear Isn't Just in Your Head and You're Not Alone

While fear can originate in your mind, much of it comes from the culture and environment you're in. It's especially easy to develop a fear-based mentality when you're taught that life is a battlefield and you must dominate others to "win." Once you internalize this Western idea, you become more likely to develop the fears of failure, losing out, and not being good enough.

According to Dr. Grange, there are two types of winning:

1. *Winning shallow*: This type of winning is motivated by the desire to beat everyone else. Winning shallow is rooted in *scarcity mentality*, or the idea that there isn't enough success to go around.
2. *Winning deep*: To win deep, you must decide what success looks like to you personally instead of accepting society's myopic definition. This version of winning is about harnessing your passion and ambition to pursue fulfillment.

In Western culture, numerous myths about how to be successful cultivate fear-based thinking. The six most common myths are:

1. *Losing turns you into a loser*. This myth propagates the idea that anyone who fails is imperfect, or who shows vulnerability is a "loser." The truth is that winners win by taking risks, failing often, and learning from their mistakes.
2. *Fear is the best motivator*. Fear doesn't improve your performance—it

undermines it. Ultimately, the more time you spend worrying about potential negative outcomes, the less energy you have to do your best work.

3. *Only the fittest survive.* Charles Darwin never suggested that it's a dog-eat-dog world where species must crush their competitors to survive. Instead, he posited that the fittest for survival were those who could best adapt to their environments. Therefore, it's more important that you're innovative than ruthless.
4. *If you're not in, you're out.* While a sense of belonging feels good, communities often embrace the fear-generating values of tribalism, exclusion, and elitism.
5. *Feelings are for failures.* Patriarchal cultures suggest that emotions should be replaced with logic. However, suppressing emotions goes against how humans work and can cause performance anxiety.
6. *You need to sacrifice.* You don't need to give up everything in your life and become a workaholic to succeed. Taking care of yourself and spending time with your loved ones is important, too.

To determine if you work in a fear-filled environment, look for the following red flags in your company:

- *It's passive aggressive.* Managers insinuate punitive threats instead of providing honest, open-hearted feedback to help you improve your performance.
- *It's predatory.* Mocking and teasing are normal ways of communicating in the company's culture.
- *It's power based.* There's a command-and-control management style so you can never question anyone who ranks above you.
- *It's possessive.* You don't feel like a part of the company—you feel owned by the company, like a cog in the machine.

Fear can have serious consequences on your life. It restricts your mental freedom by preventing you from living in the present moment. It also undermines your ability to trust others and keeps your life small by making you too afraid to take risks that would lead to growth.

Part II: Be Prepared to Be Scared

Fear has an evolutionary purpose—it's a self-protection mechanism that's designed to help you survive. When encountering a potential threat, your brain's amygdala sends out signals to get your body to quickly react. This triggers a cascade of physical, emotional, and mental effects that can manifest as one of four fear responses:

1. *Fight*: You get angry and try to defeat the threat.
2. *Flight*: You try to escape the threat.
3. *Freeze*: You play dead or pretend the threat doesn't exist.
4. *Appease*: You submit to the threat.

There are two types of fear:

1. *In-the-moment fear* emerges in direct response to a clear, present issue. It often causes you to feel panicky, like you can't breathe.
2. *Not-good-enough fear* is an unconscious fear that comes from a combination of bad things that happened in your past and your worries about the future. Not-good-enough fears dictate your life by influencing your everyday decisions without you realizing it. They're often rooted in the deeper fears of disappointing people, being inadequate, or not being loved.

To overcome in-the-moment fears, you must develop a plan of what you'll do if certain scenarios arise and then rehearse your responses until they become second nature. Examples of planned, in-the-moment fear responses include the following three strategies:

1. *Process it*. As soon as the fear arises, engage in a calming routine like controlled breathing, visualization, affirmations, or other relaxation processes.
2. *Distract from it*. Shift your focus away from the fear onto something else by listening to music, watching a television show, or having a conversation with a friend.
3. *Rationalize it*. Use logic to overcome the fear; for example, if there's turbulence on your flight, remember that plane crashes are

statistically very rare. You can also try to reframe your thinking by telling yourself that your fear response is just a sign of physical readiness.

Part III: When Fear Gets Distorted

When not-good-enough fears are distorted, they can manifest as the following anxiety-based behaviors:

- *Staying separate.* You may desire to keep some part of yourself hidden because you believe people won't accept you or your flaws. At the root of this behavior is the fear of being rejected.
- *Jealousy.* When you're jealous of other people, it's often because you're comparing yourself to them and feel inferior. At the root of jealousy is the fear that you're not lovable.
- *Perfectionism.* The drive to be perfect and to never make mistakes is often caused by the fear of failing or being a failure.
- *Judging others or yourself too harshly.* Everyone judges, but it becomes unhealthy when you criticize other people to feel superior or engage in harsh self-criticism. These behaviors are often driven by the fear of inadequacy.

The process of overcoming not-good-enough fears comprises three steps:

1. *See it.* You must first identify exactly what it is you're afraid of. This requires you to use imagery to describe how the fear appears to you and sensory details to determine how it makes you feel physically and emotionally.
2. *Face it.* Once you identify your not-good-enough fear, you must dive deeper into it. This is an uncomfortable process that requires you to assess how the fear shows up in your life, how it causes you act, and what it's costing you in terms of opportunities and relationships.
3. *Replace it.* Every not-good-enough fear is accompanied by a fear-based story that you've internalized. In this step, you must replace this story with a new narrative that gives you strength and hope.

Dr. Grange's patient Jake is an example of someone who overcame his not-good-enough fears with this three-step process. Jake was a successful athlete who was so afraid of coming out as gay that he became completely isolated from everyone in his life.

1. *See it.* Jake described his fear of coming out as feeling like an “angry grizzly bear” that was trying to protect him from being rejected by society.
2. *Face it.* Jake realized that his fear was making him paranoid, unhappy, and lonely and had separated him from friends, family, and potential partners.
3. *Replace it.* For years, Jake had believed that he was going to be shamed, hurt, and lose everything if he came out as gay. He replaced this fear-based story with a new narrative that while the world was both good and bad, he was capable of taking care of himself and therefore the grizzly bear didn't always have to be on high alert.

Not-good-enough fears are *emotional waste* that you must dispose of in the same way that you make compost. It's not a clean process, it often stinks, and it takes time to decompose. But you're left with fertile material to plant a new reality of peace, freedom, fulfillment, and connection to others.

Part IV: Replacing Not-Good-Enough Fear

Dr. Grange recommends seven strategies you can use to replace not-good-enough fears with healthier behaviors and beliefs:

1. *Replace fear with a different story.* The stories you tell yourself about yourself become your reality. To replace your current fear-based story, you must change your perspective on who you already are. Next, evolve the story to reflect who you want to become. For example, one of Dr. Grange's clients internalized the workplace racism he was experiencing into the story that he wasn't a good enough man. He decided to replace this story with one where he was a “light shiner” on racism and began calling out his boss.
2. *Replace fear with purpose.* A clear purpose provides stability during challenging times by guiding your decisions so that they're no longer

dictated by fear. To identify your purpose, reflect on your life so far and determine what it is you care about most, what challenges have been important to you, and what your values are.

3. *Replace fear with surrender.* The act of surrendering can release fear. There are three ways to surrender: You can trust in a force bigger than yourself, let go of the need to control everything, or allow emotion to flow through you instead of trying to suppress it.
4. *Replace fear with dreams and desires.* When you combine a well-defined, meaningful dream with a level of desire that matches the intensity of your fears, you'll be able to overcome any obstacles you encounter to achieve your goals. The dreamer's mindset is useful against fear because it makes you more open to failure, restarting, and doing whatever it takes to succeed.
5. *Replace fear with real connection.* A strong sense of belonging can protect you from fear by making you feel safe, confident, and happy. The ingredients of belonging in a healthy community of people are friendship, kindness, and intimacy. To foster intimacy, you must truly listen to what others are saying and demonstrate vulnerability.
6. *Replace pain with passion.* Emotional pain is an inevitable part of life. When it's combined with fear, however, it can destroy you. That's why you must transform pain into passion. This requires you to harness the energy of your pain and use it as fuel to change, fix, or overcome an issue that's important to you.
7. *Replace fear with laughter.* When fear tries to weigh you down, laughter can lift you back up. Comedy is all about highlighting life's silliness, contradictions, and absurdity. The next time you're grappling with fear, try to view it through a comedic lens by identifying what's funny about the situation.

About the Author

Dr. Pippa Grange

is a British psychologist, author, former Head of People and Team Development at The Football Association, and now the chief culture officer for the Right to Dream group. Her work specializes in improving athletes'

performances. In 2018, she helped the England team go the World Cup semifinals.

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