

The Fear Factor

By Amy Wallace

No worms (or worse) to eat here, unlike the TV show. :-) But I do want to share some interesting stuff I'm learning about fear...

Did you know fear is one of the most powerful motivators around? Consider how it affects your life. It may be a grab-you-by-the-throat, heart-stopping fight or flight response. Or it may come packaged in a little different wording. How about stress? Worry? Annoyance? Feeling uncomfortable? Wanting to run and hide? Sleep all day? Or trying harder and harder to accomplish something?

Did I miss anyone?

Not me. I have lived most of my life with a very defined set of fears that drives every encounter I have~ from my spouse and children to people at church. I've also learned that every other human on this planet has their own set of fears that, like me, started way back when.

Imagine a circle. At the top are one person's fears, let's call her Suzy. Suzy is afraid of making a mistake. Suzy's fears lead her to use coping mechanisms (how she deals with those fears) to avoid the painful feelings of messing up. For example, when Suzy is confronted with a situation where she's afraid she will mess up, like her dad's request she take a driver's education course before she can get her permit, she melts down with tears in an attempt to get out of the situation. This slams into her dad's fear of being controlled. When Dad feels controlled, he reacts with anger. Dad's angry refusal to listen to Suzy's feelings and his demand that she perform at the top of her driver's ed class feed into Suzy's fears of making a mistake and she tries harder to make the painful feelings go away with more crying or another coping mechanism. None of this works and so on around the circle Suzy and her dad go.

Nasty cycle.

Here's an example of how it looks in my home. My precious princesses fail to listen to my instructions about the level of noise in our home (which I'm convinced exceeds OSHA regulations) and I have laundry to do, mail to deal with, a ringing phone, a full calendar, and three meals to fix and/or clean up after. My way of "handling it" used to be to yell and do a whole lot of disciplining in order to stop the pressure in my cranium and calm myself down. Enter my husband who makes a comment about how he has a ton of work to do and begins to download about his day. My stress level rises and I'm feeling drained. This hits hard at my fear of failing. So I get angry and snap at my husband about my hard day hoping he'll hear me and help me see that I'm not a failure. My anger and demanding him to make me feel better hits hard at his fear of inadequacy and he withdraws. I hear the message from his withdrawal response that I've failed and we continue to trip through this cycle into more and more hurt.

We've tried learning about love languages, reading more and more scriptures and books, trying to lessen our commitments, or one of the least effective: finding more places to serve in the church.

Nothing helped. And in the long run none of it will truly get to the heart of the problem no matter how hard you try.

Because the heart of the problem is the heart.

When your heart is full of fears and messages that got written there when those fears started, you have no room for truth to permeate and heal. It's as if your heart is full of hard packed dirt. Water will get rid of some of it, but that takes time. So while you try hard to wash your mind with truth and "do better" and at the same time ignore the dirt, more dirt, more heart messages, get added.

We live out of what we believe.

And we believe what is written on our hearts.

Messages like "I'm a disappointment." "I'm unlovable." "I'm a nobody." "I'm a failure." Messages that feel so real you can taste your tears.

And that's where the healing begins. With your tears. Those watery things that you try to wipe away as you shove those messages and fears into a dark little box hoping that'll stop the hurt. But the enemy is in charge of the darkness there and is thrilled when you keep shoving things into it.

So the answer lies in bringing those messages into the light, feeling the fullness of the pain, and climbing up into God's lap and letting him wash away the lies with His whispers of truth.

Simple.

Not easy.

It hurts. A lot. But I promise it won't leave you crumpled into a heap when you drag the fears and messages into the light. The opposite will happen. You'll start down the path of true healing.

I shared with you in my example one of my fears~ failing. One of the deep, deep messages written on my heart from many sources and places I failed was this, "I'm a disappointment." I worked hard to prove that wasn't true, struggled to believe it wasn't true, and failed miserably.

Want to know what worked?

Hanging out with the Lord. Listening to my heart and then His heart toward me.

Want to know what He said?

"Come home, Amy. You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased."

Come and listen to your heart... God has so much good to write there.

Write out your fear dance. List all the fears you can think of in one column. Then in another list all the ways you deal with those fears.

Diagram a recent fear cycle you tripped though.



