

Overcoming F.E.A.R. - 1

This handout complements chapter 30 of *The Happiness Trap*, although its content differs somewhat from the book. Let's assume you have clarified your values, and set yourself a goal – but you haven't followed through on it. What stopped you? The F.E.A.R. acronym covers most of the common barriers:

- F = Fusion (stuff your mind tells you that gets in the way when you get caught up in it)
- E = Excessive goals (your goal is too big, or you lack the skills, or you lack the resources)
- A = Avoidance of discomfort (unwillingness to make room for the discomfort this challenge brings)
- R = Remoteness from values (losing touch with - or forgetting - what is important or meaningful about this)

So now, in as few words as possible, write down everything that has stopped you following through:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

Now go back, and label each answer with one or two of the letters F, E, A, or R – whichever best describe this barrier. In other words, was it F = Fusion with a story (e.g. I'll fail; it's too hard; I'll do it later; I'm too weak; I can't do it); was it E = Excessive goal (you lacked the time, money, health, facilities, skills, or support necessary; or it was just too big and you got overwhelmed); was it A = Avoidance of discomfort (you were unwilling to make room for the anxiety, frustration, fear of failure, or other uncomfortable thoughts and feelings); or was it R = remoteness from your values (you forgot or lost touch with the values underlying this goal)?

The antidote to F.E.A.R. is D.A.R.E.

D = Defusion

A = Acceptance of discomfort

R = Realistic goals

E = Embracing values

Go through your barriers, one by one, and work out how you can deal with them, using D.A.R.E. Below, you'll find some suggestions to help you.

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Defusion strategies: name the story, thank your mind, acknowledge ‘Here’s reason-giving’ or ‘Here’s judging’, name the demon/monster/passenger, recognize this is Radio Doom & Gloom broadcasting, or simply let the thoughts come and go like passing cars.

Acceptance strategies: name the feeling, observe it like a curious scientist, rate it on a scale of 1 to 10, commit to allowing it, breathe into it, make room for it, give it a shape and color,

Realistic goal-setting: if you lack skills, set goals around learning them; if your goal is too big, break it down into small chunks; if you lack resources, brainstorm how you can get them; if the goal is truly impossible, e.g. due to health or financial issues, or external barriers over which you have no direct influence, then set a different one.

Embracing values: connect with what matters to you about this goal. Is it truly meaningful? Is it aligned with your values? Is it truly important? Is it moving your life forward in the direction you wish to go?

Using these ideas (and others of your own, or of your therapist/coach), write down how you can respond to the barriers you listed above.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

Finally, ask yourself this question: am I willing to make room for the difficult thoughts and feelings that show up, without getting caught up in them or struggling with them, and take effective action, in order to do what matters, deep in my heart?

If so: go ahead and give it a go.

If not, consider these questions:

Does this really and truly matter to you?

If it does, then what is the cost to you of avoiding it or putting it off?

Would you rather have the vitality-draining pain of staying stuck, or the life-enhancing pain of moving forward?