

# From the Grove A MENTAL WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

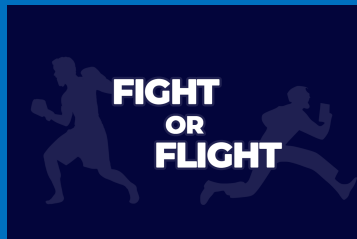
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## Fear: Healthy Dose or Too Much?

During a recent Bible Study, the scriptural reference found in Isaiah 43 led to a discussion about fear.

This article will shed light on some of the purposes of fear as well as a brief explanation of what happens biologically when fear is produced.



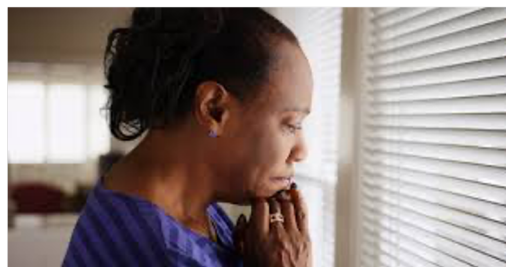
### Purpose of Fear

A healthy dose of fear is beneficial and helps us to survive. It keeps us from doing things that we shouldn't do, and thus, provides protection. For example, consider the child who experiences the discomfort from touching a hot stove. He soon learns to resist touching the stove to prevent from experiencing the pain of a burning hand. Fear is not just helpful in children, but adults as well. As adults, fear also provides a level of protection from dangerous situations. Consider if we did not fear danger. What then would keep us from walking in front of moving traffic or keep us from jumping off a building.

In addition to fear keeping us from engaging in certain acts, fear also motivates us to do some things. In other words, fear helps us to act when we need to act. For example, with COVID-19, our fear helps us to think more about hand washing, and so most of us are ensuring we wash for at least 20 seconds. Not only that, we are likely sanitizing more often, using more Clorox than normal, and spraying more Lysol.

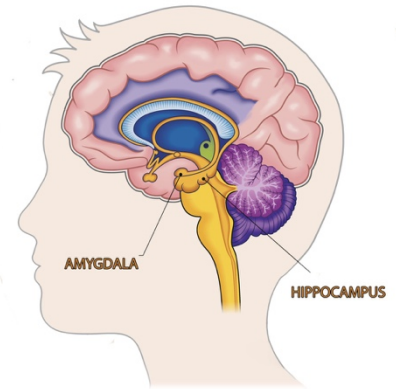


There are countless other examples that could be listed. The takeaway message is that fear has its place. Is it possible for that which helps us to also harm us if experienced in excess?



## Where Does Fear Come From?

We will not delve deeply into neuropsychology but will oversimplify the process for illustrative purposes. Whenever you perceive a threat, the brain starts a process that you're often unaware because it happens so quickly. In short, there is a portion of the brain called the amygdala, which is part of the limbic system. You can think of this area of the brain as the control system for our emotions and behaviors. The amygdala serves as an alarm that alerts other areas of the brain; which ultimately puts out a burst of energy or adrenaline. You are now in fight-or-flight mode, which prepares you to respond to perceived threats.



## Can Fear Become Unhealthy?

Fear that is heightened and prolonged can become problematic. For example, if you're often afraid and your fear is interfering in your daily activities, hindering your relationships, and keeping you from functioning, it has become a problem. If this is your case, professional help is warranted. With assistance, you can develop skills to manage your fears.

## Defeating fear with FEAR; Face Everything And Recover

FEAR is an approach to confronting your fears and is often referred to as Exposure Therapy. Many of your fears are best dealt with by admitting the fear and allowing yourself to safely experience the fear. Of course this is not to suggest that you should put yourself in life-threatening situations. For example, you shouldn't knowingly expose yourself to someone with COVID-19 just because you want to move past your fear of it.

Instead, use this approach to help you with your fears that aren't dangerous and that are a *perceived* threat to you. For some, it may be your fear of public speaking, fear of insects, or fear of heights, for example. Have you noticed that avoiding the fear makes the fear greater? In cases such as these, you can gradually increase your exposure to the fear by repeatedly confronting your fear. With time and increased exposure, you should notice less anxiety and more control. Note: professional mental help is warranted in more severe cases.

## ACTION PLAN

- Identify your greatest fear.
- Complete the "Fear Crushing Worksheet" found under the Therapeutic Exercises tab.