

How to Transform Fear into a Powerful Ally

INTRODUCTION

What do...

- Navy SEALs and Army Green Berets
- Police and SWAT team members
- Bodyguards, Bounty Hunters
- Israeli Special Forces and
- New York Taxi Drivers

... have in common?

Not only have they all mastered the art of overcoming fear, they put fear into everyone else. Later on we'll take a more traditional look at what fear is and how to conquer it, but first I would like to ask you to imagine this: You stand 6 feet 6 inches' tall and weigh in at a muscular 320 pounds. Suddenly you're confronted by a 14-year-old hoodlum. He's five feet, six inches tall and weighs 135 pounds soaking wet. He says he's going to attack you (and he's unarmed). Chances are you're going to laugh in his face. Although he could be a martial arts black belt holder, more likely he's a nitwit in need of a good, old-fashioned spanking. Fear would probably be the last thing on your mind under these circumstances.

Now, let's say you are five feet, six inches tall and weigh 135 pounds and you're confronted by an emotionally disturbed 320 pound monster who is threatening to tear you from limb-to-limb. Fear suddenly becomes a distinct possibility.

Why? Because it has to do with:

- Your **PERCEPTION** of danger
- **POWER** (how you see yourself in relationship to your adversary)
- **TRAINING** (how well equipped you are to deal with the situation)
- **ATTITUDE** (seeing yourself as a winner as opposed to a victim)
- **CONTROL** (how many options you have to control any encounter)

The most essential human need is the need for self-preservation. Foremost before food, water or shelter,

is the need to feel safe and secure. It is at the core of our ability to function. After all, if we are consumed with threats to our safety, there is little hope of taking care of our basic physical needs. It is recognized and accepted in the mental health field that self-preservation is a need more basic than any other.

The Figgie Report, a national survey on fear of crime, says that four out of five Americans are afraid of being assaulted, robbed, raped or murdered. And now there is evidence showing that chronic fear can actually contribute to a deterioration of health. How did we get to such a state?



FIG. 0.1 – Statistics are meaningless if you become the victim of a crime.

Some reports claim that crime rates, especially violent crime rates, are down. However, we should be cautious how we interpret such news. No doubt, rates of occurrence for various types of crime do go up and

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down. And some cities or areas of the country probably have experienced declines in some crimes. But in the interest of keeping a balanced perspective, we can ask ourselves this: Why do most people in law enforcement tell you that they are busier than ever?

According to the Justice Department, at the end of 1997, nearly one out of every 35 adults in the United States was in prison, in jail, or on probation or parole. That's a total of 5.7 million adults. One problem is that our prison system doesn't rehabilitate. It actually trains bad guys to become tougher and more dangerous. Moreover there are more gang members and parolees on the streets than ever before.

What government statistics don't indicate is the illicit drug trade is so lucrative that many criminals who once earned a living mugging people are now selling drugs. And drug use, especially among teenagers, continues

to increase. This is bad news because drug related crimes often go unreported, and that helps give the appearance of a declining crime problem.

Also, keep in mind that statistics are meaningless if you become the victim of a crime. No matter what the statistics say, there are three truths about crime that continue to exist:

Crime is real. Crime is everywhere. Crime can happen to you.

Personal safety is a rational and legitimate concern for everyone today. But you do have a choice. You can take charge, and create a sense of safety for yourself, or you can let the environment and people around you determine your fate. In either case, how safe you feel and how well you deal with threats to that safety will be solely determined by your capacity to deal with fear.

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