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**The #1 Reason  
You Don't Get  
What You Want!**



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# The #1 Reason You Don't Get What You Want

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**Y**ou have dreams, wishes, hopes, and desires. You may want more money, more friends, more happiness, and more peace. And you deserve all of those things.

But you find yourself wondering why you aren't getting all you want out of life. You don't seem to be getting the things you *really* need. The frustration can be, well, pretty frustrating.

Take this quick assessment as your first step to getting what you need:

- Do you find yourself in front of the television for hours on end when you should be doing something else?
- Do you spend weeks getting started on a project that only takes a few hours or a few days to complete?
- Do you find yourself overeating when you're nervous about something?
- Do you blame everyone and everything when things go wrong?
- Do you explode with rage when people don't do what you expect them to do?

When it comes to getting what we want in life, experts frequently tell us we need to improve our time management and our communication. We need to work smarter, not harder. We need to learn perseverance. That's great advice, but you know there's more to it than that.

There's a more basic and profound reason you don't get what you want. And it affects everything in your life.

Look at the list of questions again. They seem to be asking about different parts of your life, but they are all expressions of the same thing, which is the #1 reason you don't get what you want: Fear.

Whether we know it or not, we have fear of a lot of different things: fear of making mistakes, fear of being embarrassed, fear of being abandoned, fear of not fitting in, fear of losing control, fear of failure, and even fear of success.

One of the most painful is a fear of not being enough.

Everything becomes possible **outside** our comfort zone, but we're doing everything to stay **inside** it because we're afraid.

For most of us, fear really means "Forget Everything And Run" or maybe "Forever Escaping And Retreating."

We can pretend in front of strangers, friends, and even family members, but we can't kid ourselves. We've been turning away from our true selves, losing opportunities in order to stay safe in our comfort zone.

Everything becomes possible *outside* our comfort zone, but we're doing everything to stay *inside* it because we're afraid. This is a huge realization for most people.

## Beyond Sweaty Palms

You might be most aware of fear when it shows itself in physical ways. Your stomach might be in knots. You might get headaches. You might have sweaty palms. These signs are difficult to ignore.

We notice physical discomfort and want to ease the pain.

But fear shows up a lot more often in ways you may not be aware of, like excuses, blame,

constant criticism, negativity, perfectionism, procrastination, guilt, anxiety, and more. These, of course, are symptoms of fear, showing us what we're experiencing below the surface.

These symptoms of fear are easier to ignore than the physical. In fact, we frequently hang on to these symptoms because, in the short run, they seem to make us feel better. We watch too much television, eat too much junk food, gossip too much, and blame others for our own situations because it's easier than facing things that really freak us out.

## We can't go through life with sweaty palms.

For example, perfectionism is frequently driven by the belief that if we make mistakes we won't be worthy of love. Deep down, we know that perfection is impossible but we haven't changed our belief system.

That need for love, driven by perfectionism, soon turns into procrastination. We become caught in that struggle between knowing that mistakes are normal and wanting to be "perfect" in order to get love and approval from those around us.

We feel guilt when we aren't living up to what we think other people want, even when we aren't entirely clear what their expectations are.

And on and on.

One of the many things I've learned in dealing with my own fear is that we can't go through life with sweaty palms.

### Five Myths About Our Fear

Fear needs to be put into perspective. Once we start to debunk the myths, we'll find ourselves in a position to change our beliefs and enjoy the incredible benefits we get from facing our fear. When the change happens, everything is possible.

Here are five basic myths about our fear:

#### 1. Our interpretations are always right.

A lot of our fear comes from our interpretations of the world around us, especially when we were growing up. We thought because people around us – the people we trusted most – were yelling at us, we must have done something wrong. We didn't want to feel embarrassed. We didn't want to lose that connection. We didn't want to lose their love, so we started creating ways to avoid the pain. We started ducking out of situations where we might risk losing.

Fear dictated what we would and would not do, who we would and would not become. Some people used fear to accomplish goals in order to feel worthy of love. Others used fear to keep from making mistakes so they would feel worthy of love. Both interpretations avoid the central issue. Avoidance is the disease; non-avoidance is the cure.

#### 2. Other people don't have fear.

When we find ourselves in the middle of our fear, we often turn to self-pity, victimization, and a focus on what we lack. We often think we're weaker than everyone else or we're more scared than everyone else. In that state of mind, it's easy to distort reality.

The fact of the matter is other people also have fear. They may not have fear around the same things we do, or they don't let their fear stop them, and so we think they are confident and self-assured. The problem is we're comparing how we feel on the inside to how they look on the outside. I've learned in dealing with my own fear that we are not alone: We are not the worst, we are not the only ones who have fear, we are not unworthy of love.

#### 3. Our worth is equal to our performance.

Our fear is fueled by our beliefs about ourselves, how we interpret our environment and the perspectives of the people around us. We are judged throughout our lives – others make opinions about the friends we keep, the clothes we wear, the grades we get, the way we do this and the way we do that.

We often equate our performance with our worth – and worthiness – as a person. If we are not accepted by and acceptable to those around us, there must be something wrong with us. Guilt, shame, anxiety, procrastination, and many other feelings start to creep in. Over time, they become “normal” for us. The problem is we frequently don't allow ourselves to question the assumptions or the opinions of those around us.

#### 4. Mistakes are personal.

The fear of making mistakes is one of the most potent factors in keeping us from getting what we want. If we make a mistake, we may be criticized. If we make a mistake, we may feel embarrassment. If we make a mistake, people will judge us as unworthy. After all, if we make mistakes, what do we think that says about us? We're not good enough.

Mistakes are really the doorways to opportunity.

But the truth is, all important learning comes from making mistakes, from our “failures.” Mistakes are really the doorways to opportunity. They help sharpen our focus, change our perspective, and move forward faster than we would have otherwise. The fear of making mistakes – the fear of what others will think and say about our mistakes – keeps us from moving beyond our comfort zone. But our mistakes say far less about us than we might think.

#### 5. Perfection exists.

We take our interpretations of the world around us, our desire to be accepted and loved, our beliefs about mistakes and how they're tied to our worth, and we conclude that we have to be perfect. We believe that if we can be perfect, we will be loved, not rejected. And so, some of us let our fear drive us to “prove” our worthiness by accomplishing incredible things, to get our pat on the head, and be declared the perfect son or daughter, husband or wife. Others of us can be paralyzed by the idea of needing to be perfect, taking few, if any, steps to realize our potential, to share what's inside of us and to become who we truly are.

In dealing with fear as a recovering perfectionist, I learned that perfection doesn't exist. There are so many beliefs, perspectives, opinions, experiences, languages, and cultures – what could perfection possibly mean? Perfection is an illusion. What one person calls perfect, someone else doesn't like. It's impossible to please everyone and it's impossible to be perfect.

#### How These Myths Work Against You

Even before you started reading this article, you had a pretty good idea how the myths of fear have been working against you. The reason you've read this far into the article is that you're dissatisfied with your situation today, and you want to find out what to do about it.

Let's make a quick list of the ways in which fear holds us back and then I'll give you a couple of great tools to use to start facing fear.

Fear can:

- Encourage us to hang on to the negative messages we told ourselves
- Help us create excuses for not facing the things we really need to face
- Keep us from deciding on a course of action and committing to it
- Encourage us to be perfect, a standard that doesn't exist
- Result in a huge waste of time because of procrastination
- Keep us from making the progress that is so easily within our grasp

#### Change Your Mind and You Can Change Your Life

Fighting our fears is serious business. It means we have to further develop our self-awareness and reinterpret our conclusions about ourselves.

That doesn't sound like fun, but the benefits of working on our fears are huge. Our lives will never be the same. When we do the work, we can:

- Experience real freedom
- Change our relationships
- Reach our goals
- Improve our health
- Change our disposition
- Become a role model
- Understand the difference between perfection and excellence, and so much more

## Three Powerful Tools to Address Your Fear

There are numerous insights, tools, and exercises we can use to face our fear. Here are three simple yet powerful ways to get us started:

### 1. Shift our judgment

Much of our fear comes from our judgment of events occurring around us.

Two friends can witness the same event, but they will experience it differently. Their experience of that event comes from their beliefs, their previous experiences, the environment they grew up in, their education, and a host of other factors.

Two people can have the same fear for different reasons.

Several people can witness or experience the same event and have different feelings about it, some judging it as "good" and some judging it "bad."

Our response to events is driven by feelings, experiences, judgments – and fears – that usually run deeper than the event itself. These might include fear of dying, fear of loss of control, fear of commitment, fear of being able to measure up, and so on.

Whether we realize it or not, we get to choose how we respond to each event that happens.

It's important to understand that events are value neutral. They just "are." Our conditioning will influence to a large extent how we respond.

Here's a simple equation that can change your life: **E + R = O**.

E is the Event that occurs, R is our Response to the

event, and O is the Outcome we are getting in our lives.

We can't change the Event; it already occurred. We can't change other people; that's up to them. It is our Response to the Event that we can change to get different Outcomes.

We change our responses through self-awareness: understanding what our responses have been, why we respond as we do, and being very clear about what it is we want out of life.

### 2. Make an assessment of our lives.

It's very difficult to understand what we're not getting in our lives if we don't understand where we've been and what we have now.

In my workshops, I use a very simple exercise to help people get a quick, but impactful, visual depiction of their lives in less than a minute. I'm going to show you right now how to do that exercise yourself.

Draw a circle with eight segments in it, like a pizza pie cut in eight slices. Each slice should have a label at the end, on the outside curve of the slice. Label the eight sections: health, family and friends, romance, personal growth, fun and recreation, physical environment, business/career, and finances.

Inside each slice, create a scale ranging from one at the center point of the pie to ten at the outer edge.

Then, simply circle the number that best represents where you are in your life today.

For example, if your relationships with your family and friends are great, circle number nine or ten. If your health is just so-so, circle number five. If your finances are in the pits, circle number one.

After you have graded each of the eight categories, reflecting how you think you're doing in life, connect each number you've circled to the next with a line, going around the pizza. In this way, you are connecting the marks and making your own wheel of your own life.

If things are really strong in each area of your life, your marks will all be up in the eight-to-ten range.

Most of us, however, have one or several areas where things just aren't quite up to par. We're in debt and doing nothing to fix it. Our eating and sleeping habits are such that we're unhealthy and frequently sick. We work too much, and don't take time for fun and recreation. Here, our marks are typically below five.

When there are several categories with low marks, our wheel hardly resembles a circle. We're trying to run our life on a bumpy tire.

We can start to face fear when we get clarity around the things we need to fix and start to put a plan in place.

### 3. Determine what you want

Determining what we want is one of the most important tools we have. Without a specific goal, destination, or final objective, we'll find ourselves running aimlessly or stalled out. We will end up somewhere, but it may not be a place we want to be.

Many of us don't take the time to really decide what we want, partly because of the fear attached to uncertainty or the fear of what others would think about us. The key is asking some basic questions of ourselves to decide where we might want to go.

- What is the thing I look forward to more than anything?
- What am I doing when time flies?
- In what capacity do I want to have these activities in my life? As hobbies? As full-time paid employment?
- What are my skills?
- Where is the intersection between what I'm good at and what I'm passionate about?
- Would other people with my skills agree that I'm good at them?
- Do I need further education to pursue the thing I'm passionate about?
- Do I like working with people or technology?
- Do I want to work in an office or at home?

- Do I want to work indoors or outdoors?
- Do I want to work traditional hours?
- How many hours a day do I want to work?
- How many days a week do I want to work?
- How much money do I need to make per year to maintain my lifestyle?
- How much money would I *like* to make?
- What are my family's needs?

It may be surprising how much you can begin to put fear in perspective when you start asking yourself specific questions about what you want. Part of dealing with fear is taking action, showing yourself what's possible. The first ingredient in taking action is asking questions to know what action to take.

Give these three powerful tools a try. They will start to bring clarity to where you are, what you want, and how to start reining in your fear.

So, it's time to change our understanding of fear. Instead of "Failure Expected And Received," we now must "Face Everything And Recover." As Helen Keller said, "The best way out is always through."

As I bring this to a close, there are a couple of things I think you should know:

- While it may not always feel like it, there are people who are rooting for you.
- While you may not always believe it, you have amazing things inside you.
- While you may not always be able to admit it, you deserve happiness and fulfillment.
- While it may not be fun to face it, self-awareness and diligence are critical to the process.

Let's start moving forward in order to get through. I promise you your life will change in ways you cannot imagine.

## About Dr. Joe

Joe Serio is a keynote speaker, trainer, author, and former coward who is known for his work in investigating the Russian Mafia. His *Get the Nerve™* series of books and workshops empower people to live their dreams.

For more free resources on fear and other topics, visit my website at [www.joeserio.com](http://www.joeserio.com)