

What's your Fear Pattern?



Identifying your core fear can provide the tools to break the pattern hindering you.

Do you dream of having a more fulfilling career but find yourself procrastinating? Some may say, "I don't have enough time" or "I need more money to pursue my dreams." However, if you dig deeper, you will discover the underlying reason for your hesitation: Fear. But what exactly are you afraid of?

Take this quiz to identify which of the Four Core Fears is holding you back. Respond to each scenario by circling the answer that reflects your most prominent thought. Tally up the frequencies of the letters you circled in response to the odd and even-numbered questions, and use the answer key to gain insights on overcoming your fear.

Scenario #1

A new opportunity arises in a department you've been eyeing at work. It's a higher-pressure role with substantial rewards. You:

- A. Contemplate applying, but doubt your chances against more experienced candidates.
- B. Feel anxious about handling the pressure and doubts if you can keep up.
- C. Worry about informing your boss, who believes you're content in your current position.
- D. Fixate on potential negative consequences and the risk of disrupting your career trajectory.
- E. Embrace the opportunity and dive in, seeing it as a well-deserved break you've been waiting for.

Scenario #2

Your side business gains momentum, allowing you to leave your day job and pursue it full-time—the dream you've worked towards for years. You:

- A. Worry about financial risks and the uncertainty of sustaining yourself.
- B. Discuss and plan your resignation timeline eagerly.
- C. Feel uncertain that your part-time success will not translate to full-time success.
- D. Have a fear of being solely responsible for generating income.
- E. Hold back from sharing the decision with friends, concerned about their reactions to quitting your current job.

Scenario #3

After a decade at a publishing house, you face a layoff. Interior design has always been a dream, but the timing never seemed right. You:

- A. Acknowledge the slim odds of success in interior design and opt to search for another publishing role.
- B. Acknowledge your passion for interior design as a hobby but fear meeting the expectations of paying clients.
- C. Feel anxious about the reactions from colleagues and family when revealing your career change.
- D. Hesitate to start afresh in a new field, opting for the familiarity of your current industry.
- E. Secretly welcome the layoff as the nudge needed to pursue your dream of becoming an interior designer.

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Scenario #4

You've always wanted to become a schoolteacher, but the modest starting salaries in the field nudged you toward a career in pharmaceutical sales. A recent windfall in the form of an inheritance from your great aunt and your spouse's salary bump has allowed you to transition into the world of education. You:

- A. Hesitate with a gnawing sense of responsibility that tugs at your conscience; what if your spouse loses his job unexpectedly? Finally, have the opportunity to chase your lifelong dream, and you begin searching for teaching positions, almost disbelieving
- B. your stroke of good fortune.
Remember a rowdy neighborhood of kids, igniting doubts about your ability to handle a classroom full of energetic eight-
- C. year-olds.
Think about the 25 pairs of eyes depending on you daily in a teaching role and how that contrasts with the absence of such
- D. pressure in your current sales job.
Begin hesitating as you worry about being perceived as indecisive or fickle for considering such a dramatic shift in your
- E. career path.

Scenario #5

Your boss, impressed with your performance, asks about your long-term career goals. As office gossip hints at her upcoming promotion and possible recommendation of you for her job, excitement and nervousness fill your mind, marking a pivotal moment in your career journey. You:

- A. Worry that you might lack the necessary knowledge to excel in the role. The fear of failure looms large, threatening to derail your career.
- B. Feel irritated by the added responsibilities that come with performing well. It's frustrating when success leads to more tasks. Consider the implications for Jeff and Marci, who are more senior. This situation could stir up significant office tensions.
- C. Become paralyzed by fear as you envision every possible negative outcome if you were to make a mistake in this new role. Feel the excitement at the prospect of such a fantastic opportunity. You've worked hard and believe you deserve this chance
- D. for advancement.
- E.

Scenario #6

You express your readiness for a career change to a friend, admitting uncertainty about where to begin. She extends help by introducing you to a contact who could facilitate this transition. You:

- A. Feel daunted by the idea of switching careers, considering stepping back from your declaration due to the overwhelming nature of the change.
- B. Thank your friend for her support, and you decide to reach out to the contact later in the day, planning to invite them to lunch. Hesitate to call the contact, citing the challenging job market, and wait until the economy improves.
- C. Experience a knot in your stomach, signaling a critical juncture where you ponder whether it's time to embrace change or
- D. remain stagnant.
Wrestle with self-doubt, questioning your preparedness and experience, and concerned that the contact may not view you as
- E. a credible candidate

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Scenario #7

Since relocating 1000 miles away from your family for your current job, homesickness has crept in, casting a shadow over your career satisfaction. Thoughts about returning closer to your hometown, a bustling city with ample offerings, have been tugging at your heartstrings more prominently. You:

- A. Temper your expectations and recognize the slim chances of finding a job in your hometown.
- B. Have an undercurrent of worry, fearing your skill set may be less valued in a larger city amidst stiff competition.
- C. Have images of what friends and family might think swirling in your thoughts, painting a picture of potential judgment if you were to return.
- D. Contemplating the risks of uprooting a career you've cultivated in your current location, the looming uncertainties of significant change weigh heavily on your mind.
- E. Reach out to connections back home in the hopes of uncovering opportunities tailored for you, believing that the right job could be awaiting your return.

Scenario #8

Despite your parents' sacrifices to put you through college and law school, a sense of guilt weighs on you as you realize your lack of passion for your work. The career that once seemed promising now fills you with dread, making each day at the law firm a struggle to endure. You:

- A. Wish you could pivot towards a new path, but the allure of your current lifestyle prevents you from considering a pay cut. Understand that transitioning to a career you are passionate about might not sit well with your family, but you take the necessary steps nonetheless.
- B. Compel yourself to push through and work harder, embracing the "Never Give Up" motto as you grapple with your current situation.
- C. Strategically balance doing enough to please those higher in the ranks while avoiding getting burdened with an overwhelming caseload.
- D. Harbor hesitation about sharing your feelings with your parents, fearing their potential disappointment if you were to confide in them about your internal struggles.
- E.

Scenario #9

After your boss is fired at the growing startup company, you aspire to take her position, believing your ideas and energy would be valuable. However, your resume lacks the required experience for the job, presenting a hurdle in your career advancement. You:

- A. Might feel inclined not to bother applying, convinced that your chances of securing the position are slim.
- B. Hold on believing that you could excel in the role but harbor doubts, asking yourself if you are prepared for this challenge. Choose to pretend that you are not interested in the job to avoid appearing presumptuous, masking your true desire for the role.
- C. Fret over the possibility of facing a fate similar to your boss, being let go if the company isn't satisfied with your performance.
- D. Clearly articulate to the hiring manager why you stand out as the optimal candidate for the position.
- E.

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Scenario #10

Your doctor attributes your recent health issues to work-induced stress and the extensive hours spent at the office. She recommends a remedy in the form of regular vacations and a more balanced work schedule, assuring you that both are feasible solutions. She also suggests that adopting this approach will prioritize your well-being and enhance your overall productivity. You:

- A. Express concerns: "I'll be stressed during vacation, thinking about the mounting workload awaiting my return."
- B. Agree with your doctor's suggestions, recognizing it's time to change and afford yourself some much-needed rest.
- C. Harbor fears that reducing your workload may result in decreased performance.
- D. Contemplate, "If I enhance productivity within a shorter timeframe, it may increase workload."
- E. Disregard the doctor's advice and are apprehensive that leaving the office by 6 o'clock will portray you as lacking commitment to teamwork.

Scenario #11

You enjoy your job as an editor but also dream of being a novelist and writing the book you've been thinking about for years. The idea of crafting that book, seeing it bound and published, fills you with satisfaction. Your best friend wonders why you haven't started yet, needing you to consider taking the plunge into fulfilling your dream. You:

- A. Voice concerns, mentioning that getting a publisher is a challenging task. Writing a book seems pointless if there's no guarantee of it being published.
- B. Feel anxious about subjecting your work to scrutiny and critiques when putting yourself out there as a novelist.
- C. Worry about how your employer will perceive you promoting a book without discussing it with them beforehand.
- D. Ponder about the book's potential success, envisioning the complexities of juggling your job, managing publicity, and caring for your kids if it takes off.
- E. Respond positively to your friend, decide to take action, and begin writing this week, setting the wheels in motion to pursue your dream of authorship.

Scenario #12

After being unemployed for four months and searching for a job in your current field, you desire to transition into a new industry but are hesitant to take that leap. Feeling uncertain about how to make this shift, you stand at a crossroads. You:

- A. Contemplate, "What if I dislike this new career path? What if I end up regretting the decision to make a change?"
- B. Decide to broaden your job search to include opportunities in the new field, recognizing that it might lead you to your desired position.
- C. Opt to stick with the familiar, reasoning that avoiding the risks of trying something new and potentially failing is better. Mull over, "What if I secure a job in the unfamiliar field and it becomes apparent that I lack the necessary skills and knowledge?"
- D. Lean towards avoiding additional rejection, finding it challenging to hear "no" in your current field, let alone face it in a different industry.
- E. different industry.

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Scenario #13

Your partner suggests that you might find more happiness at work by distancing yourself from the daily lunch group filled with negativity and gossip, affecting your attitude at work. You acknowledge their point and consider making a change. You:

- A. Blame yourself for indulging in negativity and vow to do better.
- B. Defend your unhappiness by refusing to hold your negative co-workers accountable.
- C. Fear the social fallout of breaking away from the work clique.
- D. Know your partner is correct, but you're reluctant to give up being "in the know."
- E. Tired of draining conversations, you plan to make new lunch arrangements immediately.

Scenario #14

Your boss has asked for productivity improvement ideas as your annual review approaches next week. You are considering suggesting working from home twice a week, a perk not currently offered to others in the department. You:

- A. Worry about losing influence if you're not physically present in the office.
- B. Prepare to present your request during your upcoming review, and you hope for a positive response.
- C. Hesitate to ask because you're concerned about staying focused with the temptation of the TV nearby.
- D. Dislike being the center of attention if you are the first to receive the opportunity.
- E. Become anxious that your co-workers may be envious or your boss might perceive your request as selfish.

Scenario #15

After working in banking for eight years, volunteering at a children's hospital inspired you to pursue a career in nursing. You're deciding if you will take two years of classes to make this career transition. You:

- A. Uncertain about returning to school due to previous academic challenges.
- B. Question if you have the energy to engage in daily work where life is at stake.
- C. Dread interacting with family members who resist change in favor of stability.
- D. Fear that working and attending school concurrently may be too overwhelming.
- E. Consider enrolling in local college courses because life is too short not to pursue your dreams.

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Answer Key

Odd Numbers: Mostly "A" Responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "C" Responses

Fear of Failure

You might hesitate to try new things or pursue your goals due to a fear of failure. It's common to feel more comfortable sticking to what's safe, but it's important to challenge yourself and step out of your comfort zone. When you leave your comfort zone, it's normal to feel uneasy.

People who fear failure often take setbacks personally, thinking, "I am a failure," instead of acknowledging specific shortcomings. This mindset can stem from a desire for guaranteed outcomes before taking new steps, which might resonate with you.

Allow yourself to make mistakes and embrace imperfection. Start by setting small, achievable goals to boost your confidence. When the fear of failure paralyzes you, address it head-on. When the question, "What if I fail?" evokes paralyzing fear, answer it. Imagine you've decided to pursue your dream career, and it doesn't work out. What if that happened? What would you do? By answering your own "what if?" questions, you reduce your fear and develop a backup plan (Plan B) that gives you mental clarity and courage to overcome your fear of failure.

Odd Numbers: Mostly "B" Responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "D" Responses

Fear of Success

You may feel confident in your abilities but are wary of the pressure of maintaining success, increased responsibilities, and higher expectations. The thought of sustaining success might be daunting, leading you to prefer staying comfortable as a big fish in a small pond rather than venturing into new challenges.

It's important not to underestimate yourself. You have the potential to achieve more than you realize, but you won't discover it until you allow yourself to step out of your comfort zone and embrace challenges. You'll gain new confidence and experience personal growth by challenging yourself.

Some individuals in this situation face what's known as the "Imposter Syndrome," which is more common among women. It involves the fear of being exposed; that they will discover you are not as great as they once thought you were. If you relate to this, be mindful of how you explain your success. Instead of attributing your accomplishments solely to luck or circumstances, acknowledge your talents, determination, and personal qualities that contribute to your success on your journey.

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Answer Key

Odd Numbers: Mostly "C" Responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "E" Responses

Fear of Disapproval

When making changes, you tend to seek approval from others, and if that approval is not received or seems unlikely, you feel stuck. Seeking validation through external factors like possessions, titles, or money can hinder your progress toward your desired life. It's important to break free from this "approval addiction" by prioritizing your own approval over others'. This shift will help you align with your authentic self and find the right path.

Sometimes, this approval-seeking behavior can stem from a fear of rejection, causing you to take rejection personally and feel paralyzed when seeking help to pursue your dreams. Those who fear disapproval often struggle with feelings of inadequacy, thinking they are not good enough in various aspects.

Instead of focusing on perceived weaknesses, it's beneficial to identify and concentrate on your strengths. Take some time to list your strengths. Your true path will leverage your unique strengths, those inherent abilities, and talents you possess, enjoy, and frequently use. Embracing and utilizing these strengths will guide you toward fulfilling your potential.

Odd Numbers: Mostly "D" Responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "A" Responses

Fear of Losing Control

If you're hesitant to follow your heart because you fear losing everything, financially, professionally, or in your relationships, you may feel overwhelmed by the idea of change. Many individuals find that putting their worries into perspective is key to conquering this fear. Perhaps it's time for you to consider a similar approach.

Some individuals who fear losing control exhibit a behavior known as "catastrophizing." This term describes the tendency to spiral into worst-case scenarios about the future. For instance, you might envision yourself homeless after a failed attempt at pursuing a new career.

One strategy to counter this negative spiral is introducing an equal irrational best-case scenario. Visualize a positive outcome where you excel in your new job, receive multiple promotions, earn a higher salary, and gain professional recognition. You can interrupt the negative thought cycle by shifting your focus to an optimistic scenario.

Following this exercise, assess the most likely scenario realistically. Transitioning responsibly step by step is more plausible than either extreme outcome. By breaking down your fears and focusing on manageable steps, you can navigate change with a clearer perspective and a more balanced mindset.

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Answer Key

Odd Numbers: Mostly "E" Responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "B" Responses

Unstuck and Unstoppable

Congratulations! You've grasped a crucial truth: fear is a common feeling. What sets you apart is your refusal to let fear dictate your actions. Instead of allowing fear to hold you back, you've cultivated the courage to proceed even in the face of uncertainty. Through practice, you've honed the ability to move forward despite your fears.

Your courage and confidence are your guiding lights, empowering you to navigate challenges and obstacles along your journey. By staying steadfast and unwavering in your pursuits, you are well-equipped to discover the right path and persevere through any obstacles.

Note: This quiz has been adapted from the book **Brave Enough To Succeed: 40 Steps To Getting Unstuck by Valorie Burton.*