

# THE EXPERTS

## LEADERSHIP

### 11 fears that might be holding you back



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It's been said that FEAR stands for "Forget Everything And Run." It's that uncomfortable, disconcerting feeling that causes us to take a back seat in our own life and prevents us from proactively moving forward to reach our goals and aspirations. Instead of facing a personal, business or workplace situation head on and taking control of the proverbial handlebars of life, fear causes us to turn the other way, freeze in our tracks or poke our head in the sand.

One way to counteract fear's adverse impact on your life and career is to recognize the type of fear that might be defining you and driving your actions – or lack thereof. In fact, there are many "types" of fears that will prevent you from achieving in both your personal and professional life. Recognizing the specific fears that are holding you back is the critical first step toward breaking free of the emotional paralysis and living a more carefree, uninhibited life. As the saying goes, "No guts, no glory."

Below are 11 common fears that hold people back from what they desire personally and professionally:

**1. Fear of Success** This is actually a fear of achieving your dreams and standing out. Fear of the attention you will receive should you actually realize success. Yes, people might look at you, and talk about you, which can make you feel self-conscious. Sometimes, it's the fear of taking the steps necessary to work toward your goal, or knowing what to do first when all seems daunting at the onset. We all have things we want to achieve in life but, by giving into this particular fear, you lose faith in yourself and your abilities, and also faith in those who truly have your best interest at heart and want to see you succeed. And, remember that even baby steps are forward momentum.

**2. Fear of Leading** With leadership comes responsibility, and many are afraid of being responsible for an outcome that impacts not only themselves, but also the people they are guiding. Many with this fear worry and wonder, "What if I lead them the wrong way?" This is where you need to

trust your intuition to guide you and have faith that you will make the right decisions – the same faith others have instilled in you so they may follow. Letting go of the outcome and its various possible impacts brings freedom and, with it, releases you from fearing the unknown. It allows you to trust your leadership skills and be an example for others.

**3. Fear of Speaking** Many people fear public speaking more than any other activity. Speaking requires a palpable level of confidence and ability. In our lives and careers, we are sometimes required to present thoughts and ideas to others. Whether it is ideas at a school PTA meeting, a speech at a wedding or funeral, a briefing during a staff meeting or a full-scale conference keynote, it's all public speaking. Being a confident speaker requires training, not talent. Master this skill and you will command the attention and respect that you deserve and the successes will ensue.

**4. Fear of Encroachment** Many women and men today are working in fields that were once traditionally gender-specific, such as the military, manufacturing, construction, automotive, nursing, fashion and beauty, culinary arts, etc. Working in an environment with a gender-based stereotype has its own challenges and requires a high level of confidence in your abilities and a strong voice to be heard, and even supported, among others who may not regard you as a peer. If your desires are unconventional or nontraditional or simply go against what is expected of you by family members or friends, dig deep and stay true to who you are and what you want out of life. You don't have to be loud and aggressive; just be unwavering in your vision and persevere.

**5. Fear of Power** Power is your proverbial fuel source – where your inner strength emanates from, your passions burn bright. It's the juice that allows you to keep going in the face of adversity. Without power, you simply cannot move forward amid life's seemingly endless road blocks. For all of its importance, power is simply a mindset – a genuine, heartfelt belief that you can do anything you set your mind to. Period. If you aren't tapping into your authentic power, take some time to dig deep and cultivate it. It's there and fully available for you to use, and it's ready to make

your dreams come true. Start small, achieve, and savor it. Then confidently aim a little higher, achieve and revel in it. Before long, you'll be powerful enough to shoot for the stars.

**6. Fear of Inadequacy** Feelings of inadequacy can come from inherent low self-esteem or past negative life experiences. If someone has told you that you couldn't do something or shamed you into believing you weren't capable of doing something "well enough," you may carry that feeling of ineptitude and not even realize it. This subconscious stronghold can be truly debilitating. The best defense against a fear of inadequacy is to learn and master the specific skill, subject or activity in question and, in doing so, you will become self-assured in your execution. If it's more about fundamental self-esteem, seek out the emotional support to help you value and believe in your own capabilities.

**7. Fear of Failure** All too often we stop short of attempting something new for fear we might embarrass ourselves or, worse, fail altogether. Any given undertaking has the possibility of resulting in failure, which is never a desirable or welcome outcome. But, when facing something new, a fear of failure can be amplified as anxiety, nerves, and our "fight or flight" instinct kicks in. These intense feelings can cause us to put our aspirations on the shelf where they can languish in perpetuity. Mary Kay Ash perhaps said it best: "Fail forward to success." Indeed, failure is part of the road toward success and should not be feared but embraced as an opportunity for growth.

**8. Fear of Compromising Integrity** Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is looking or will ultimately know. Many fear that, in order to be successful in a career, we have to compromise our integrity and go against what we believe to be right. Overcoming this concern requires nothing more than establishing a specific set of boundaries within yourself and knowing exactly where and when you will draw the line – and sticking steadfast to that plan of action. It's a commitment to making belief-based decisions in all aspects of your life so that, when success is realized, there is no guilt or angst involved about how that success manifested. It's important to recognize that you can be successful while adhering to your personal value system.

**9. Fear of Vulnerability** While it can be uncomfortable and downright scary to open yourself up and expose your true inner self and your ideas and aspirations to

others of importance in your life, doing so can be cathartic – and a true turning point in effecting positive change. Letting down your guard takes courage and strength, and allowing yourself to be vulnerable can help you better relate with people on a more intimate and personal level.

**10. Fear of Being Alone** Many people stay in abusive relationships or negative career situations because they are afraid of being alone, breaking away from the pack, or being isolated from a situation and people they once valued. It's impossible to be completely content in life if you are uncomfortable being by yourself, or if your positive frame-of-mind is contingent on anyone or anything else – whether personal relationships or professional affiliations. Such co-dependency allows your attempts at happiness and success to be controlled by external third parties, which will rarely bear optimal results.

**11. Fear of Appearing Selfish** For some, it feels selfish to do anything for themselves so, instead, they do for everybody else and either burn out, harbor feelings of resentment, or both. To neglect your own needs and focus solely on those of others can make you feel overwhelmed, stressed out, under pressure and weighed down. Often, it can be difficult to find a way out of this quagmire once people have developed expectations and have come to depend on you – and you're not one to disappoint. However, taking care of your needs first is not a selfish luxury, but rather a psychological imperative to ensure you're emotionally nourished in your own right. Only then should you tend to the needs of others, which should be in addition to and not in lieu of.

The best way to combat any fear is to hit it head on, keep moving forward and stay focused on achieving your goal. There will always be obstacles that make reaching your goal seem impossible, and you must be disciplined and tenacious enough to stay focused and on track toward your goal. You must also be committed enough to not only make a promise to yourself, but also see it through even when the going gets tough. Only then can you keep the fear at bay and hit the fast track toward success.

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