

# Spiritual Curriculum for This Time of Pandemic

## Working with Fear

by  
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The general consensus and our deep conditioning tell us that it is our fear that will keep us safe.

- That if we know all the horrible things that might happen, we'll be better able to deal with them.
- That our fear will keep us vigilant against danger.
- That expecting the worst will help us guard against disaster.

What if this consensus is totally wrong? What if the truth is that all fear is ultimately toxic, and that it prevents us from truly accessing the deepest wisdom and the greatest love? Fear (that is a sustained fear and not just a momentary startle) raises the level of stress hormones, lowers immunity, sends us to our reptile brain, shuts down our connection to the higher brain functions like empathy, understanding, intuition and love. Fear separates us and blinds us to the miracle of our interconnectivity. Fear shuts down the heart, keeping it from receiving the blessings of this precious moment.

Fear is ...

**F**antasized

**E**xperiences

**A**ppearing as

**R**eal

I like this acronym because it reminds me that fear is happening in the mind. If I can create just a bit of distance and perspective about my fearful thoughts, I can notice when they emerge, and release them with compassion. In a moment of

fearlessness, I can choose wisdom, assessing the risk before me with clear-eyed deliberation, and act in alignment with the force of the Great Love.

Yes, fear happens in the mind. I get startled and that sense of alarm activates a cascade of fearful imaginings. “What will happen to this fragile world, to my health, my finances, to all my loved ones?!” These questions inevitably lead me towards anxiety and despair.

What the real and useful questions can be are, “How shall I live the gift of my each and every moment? Will this moment be fueled by that fear? How can I release the illusion of control, and surrender to the Divine Will that dwells within me? Will my worries cloud the possibilities of joy, right here, right now? How can I rise to the extraordinary challenge that this moment holds, with all my faculties at the ready?”

I believe that anything we do from fear is tainted or somehow distorted and might do as much harm as good. Doing that same action, sourced in love, can by its very essence, transform the doer. If anything might keep me safe, it will be my clear-headed, open-hearted presence... my ability to respond wisely to the gifts and challenges of this moment.

What an amazing opportunity for practice! Every time we have the presence of mind to release fear as it is arising, we strengthen that spiritual “muscle,” and we build the capacity for unconditional joy, infusing every moment with an inner buoyancy and steady calm, no matter the weight of outer catastrophe or the disturbance of unexpected turbulence.

As I investigate each moment of fear or anxiety as it arises, I suspect that all these thoughts have their root in the Fear of Death. That root-fear holds me captive in its chains of limitation. When I am held hostage by that Fear of Death, I can’t know the truth of my infinite Soul. And it is in knowing, really knowing myself as a Soul, that I am liberated.

As a Soul I experience Life, and Death, as a great adventure. I am open to learning from everything and everyone. I welcome joy and sorrow in equal measure. As a Soul I dive into this amazing story of loss and redemption, and yet I remember that forms and identities come and go. The small “I,” (*mochin d’katnut*) will be

swept away while the large “I,” (*mochin d’gadlut*) will know itself more deeply and thoroughly because of this journey.

When I know myself as a Soul, my root-fear of Death fades and recedes and no longer fuels a life that is driven by fear. Those thoughts still happen, but they no longer compel.

This time of pandemic holds an extraordinary opportunity for facing our fears, turning towards love, awakening to the truth of our interconnectivity and knowing ourselves as radiant Souls that shine God’s light. This is the light that heals and makes whole a world that feels so broken.

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