

Drowning Your Fear in Love

Written by Nirmala
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Q: When I hear people expressing their beliefs, I want to get people to agree with my beliefs or think of me in a certain light. Lately, when I'm approached by someone asserting a strong belief, I see them doing the same thing. Still, an overwhelming desire arises in me to get them to see it my way, but that's just another viewpoint! When I notice I'm doing that I let it go, usually by not responding or by smiling, listening, and allowing them to speak but not taking what they say personally. Not taking it personally is the hardest thing!

A: Viewpoints are only a problem when they are held rigidly. When we hold our viewpoints lightly, we are more able to recognize that all viewpoints have some truth to them. Then we can share and explore our own and other's viewpoints and be enriched by them all. This doesn't mean all viewpoints are equally true, which is the trap the media falls into when they try to present a "balanced" report and so include a viewpoint that has almost no truth to it. But by holding our own and other's viewpoints lightly and exploring them openly and thoroughly, we can determine how much truth a viewpoint has.

When we hold our viewpoints lightly, we are less likely to feel threatened by other people's viewpoints and therefore less likely to feel a need to change someone else's mind. There's room for all viewpoints. You may also find that introducing someone to your viewpoint is much easier if you first express some agreement with that person's viewpoint.

The reason people hold their viewpoints rigidly is simply because they are afraid. Holding any idea or belief rigidly is a response driven by fear. There are two movements within life. One is love and the other is fear. All movement is motivated by one of these. Love is the movement or expression of our essence. It includes everything from a sweet personal love for a lover or child to a profound sense of the divine oneness and goodness of everything. Love includes all of the qualities of our Being: awareness, spaciousness, aliveness, and connectedness all rolled into one. Love is our essence. It is what we are made of, and it's the most real and true thing there is. In contrast, fear is any movement of thought that restricts, constricts, distorts, or limits the flow of love. Fear is a conceptual structure in our mind that limits or distorts our experience of the limitless love that is always here. Love exists outside of thought, while fear doesn't exist except as a movement of thought.

Like many of the things that seem to be dualities, love and fear are not actually two opposite realities. The apparent duality of love and fear is like the apparent duality of wet and dry: Only one thing exists, and that is water. When there's a lot of it, we call that wet. When there isn't much of it, we call that dry. Dryness is just a concept. Similarly, fear is not an actual thing; it is

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simply a word we use to describe the relative absence of love. Fear is any movement of our ego or mind that restricts or limits our experience of love and thereby gives us a dry experience that is relatively empty of love. The love is not actually destroyed or gone; it's just not in our experience anymore.

Holding rigidly to a viewpoint or belief is a movement of fear because it limits or constricts the flow of awareness. By this definition, all ideas and beliefs are movements of fear, as they limit or direct our awareness and love. However, this is always a matter of degree, as some movements of thought constrict our experience of love more than others. Furthermore, this capacity to limit or direct awareness isn't bad or wrong, but the mechanism that consciousness came up with to create the entire world and all its experiences and illusions. To experience something, we have to limit or direct awareness. That is how Being creates contrast and differences. To use a metaphor, in a world made up completely of water, without a way to dry things out, everything would always be soaking wet. In this world where the only reality is love, without ideas, beliefs, and even fears, we would be drowning in love with no contrasting dryness.

To further clarify this, there are also two forms of fear. One is objective fear, which is a physiological response to an actual threat or danger in our environment. This type of fear is a healthy part of our organism, as it can protect us. The second type of fear is activated when our mind imagines a threatening or dangerous outcome and triggers the same physiological effects in our body and the same restriction and contraction of our awareness. This type of fear isn't wrong, but it creates all of the drama and misunderstandings of our ego-driven experiences. Most of our mentally-generated fears have *some* truth to them, in that they *can* happen. But most of these fears have very little truth to them, as they don't usually happen.

People disagreeing with us can trigger deeper fears about what will happen if we are wrong or if others continue to believe something that is wrong. If we are afraid, then we will try to get others to change their minds or try to convince them that we are right. But our fears about what will happen if we or others are wrong are not usually very complete or true. What we fear may not happen at all or things might turn out quite differently.

Fear is the driving force behind many beliefs and ideologies. For example, many on the political right are afraid of the concentration of power in the government. Given the path of history, their fear has some truth to it. On the other hand, many on the left are afraid of the concentration of power in corporations and the wealthy, and their fear also has some truth to it. But neither of these fears contains the whole truth, and because of that, the solutions on both sides tend to be one-sided. In this way, fear has the power to reduce our awareness of the truth.

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To give fear a chance against the stronger and more powerful reality of love, fear has the advantage of just needing to create the appearance of there being a problem, and often then our mind creates even more thoughts and more fear. Just a thought of something bad happening is enough to trigger fear.

What can we do when a fear seems so real? The simple antidote is to love your fear. Give your thoughts and fears the same fullness of attention and curiosity you would give a new lover. Loving our fear allows us to see it more fully and clearly and to realize how small it is. Fear is a small truth masquerading as a big truth. Loving our fear enables us to see through this disguise. Just as you don't need to get others to change or drop their viewpoints, you don't need to get rid of or go to battle with your fears. Instead, just drown your fears in love!

When someone is sharing their viewpoint and it triggers a fear in you, just love your fear, love your own viewpoint, and love that person's viewpoint, no matter how small it is. It doesn't cost you anything to love this way since the supply of love is endless. In this moister atmosphere of flowing love, the relative truth of all viewpoints can be recognized and enjoyed.