**Good Fears Vs. Bad Fears**

Fear is an instinctive emotion that has allowed the human race to survive. It’s part of our natural makeup and throughout our lives, we'll continue to feel fear in certain situations. If we stop feeling fear, then we’re probably dead!

The thing is that fear works both ways. It can be good for you or it can hold you back. Sometimes, it can harm you. This is why it’s important to recognize the difference between good fears and bad fears. Here’s what you need to know:

***Good fears***

* **Good fears alert us to immediate danger**

The fear of driving on a wet slippery road can save your life. So can the fear of going out at night in a crime-infested neighborhood. This fear signals you to either proceed with extreme caution or not proceed at all.

These and similar types of fears can protect you from immediate danger. They disappear once the danger is no longer present. This food fear is healthy and essential throughout our lifetimes.

* **Good fear is a precautionary fear**

Having a childproof home and a good alarm system doesn't mean you're paranoid. It stems from a good fear that can save your life and the lives of your family. Insisting that your kids wear lifejackets when boating or wearing seatbelts also falls into this category.

This fear is associated with taking precautions that can prevent potential danger and save lives. It's a totally valid and even necessary fear.

* **Good fear is constructive**

The fear of failing an exam or being overlooked for a promotion can motivate you to work hard to achieve your goals. It's a healthy fear of failure that instead of holding you back, propels you forward.

Good fear is also one that drives you to compete and do your best to come out at the top. In this case the fear of losing or coming out second best is a constructive one that motivates you to take action.

* **A good fear is rational**

Good fear is based on logic and rationality: if you go swimming in shark-infested waters, the odds are that you'll become lunch. A good fear is always based on the simple logical equation of doing A will lead to B.

More importantly, you know that the fear is rational because you've either learned from a previous situation or because the logic is crystal clear.

An irrational fear would be based on false logic: if you go into the water you'll drown or get eaten by sharks. Hence, you'll never go swimming. This is totally irrational because it’s not based on a specific situation or immediate danger.

* **Good fear is temporary**

A healthy fear disappears once the danger is gone. You don’t continue to dwell on it or obsess about it. If it does, then it's an unhealthy fear.

Let's take the example of the slippery road. Once the rain stops and the road dries, you won't think twice about driving on it because the danger is gone.

* **A good fear helps you avoid future complications**

The fear of contracting a serious disease like HIV or COVID will ensure that you always have safe sex and take all the necessary precautions to stay safe and well. This also applies to regular medical checkups and a healthy lifestyle. Naturally, it's extremely beneficial because prevention is better than cure!

Likewise, the fear of financial loss when undertaking a big investment will drive you to make sure you have enough assets and savings to keep you going in case you do lose your investment.

***Bad fears***

* **Bad fears hold you back**

Bad fears are those that limit us from moving forward with our lives or seizing new opportunities. We've all given in to these types of fears and many of us have regretted it. The root cause is almost always the fear of taking risks.

* **Bad fears weaken emotional health**

The funny thing is that we know when we’re being controlled by a bad fear. Yet, we don’t think we're able to overcome it. These negative feelings and struggling with our fears can take a toll on our emotional health.

First of all, bad fears sap our self-confidence. We feel ashamed of having excessive fears that nobody else seems to have. Over time, this may begin to affect our relationships and cause us to become more isolated.

* **Bad fears are irrational**

When you tell yourself that because you're afraid of sharks you'll never go swimming, you know you're being totally irrational. Yet you feel helpless to stop it.

Bad fears are not only irrational but over-exaggerated. your mind magnifies the fears so that they become horrible worst-case scenarios that contradict logic and rationality. It's here that a fear can develop into a phobia.

* **Bad fears can become obsessions**

While good fears are temporary, bad fears continue to prey on you because they're not based on rationality. You dwell on the often and feel panicked and helpless. When a fear becomes an obsession, it's very likely that it will develop into a phobia over time.

* **Bad fears blind you to real danger**

You may get caught up in bad fears that you don't recognize a valid fear when it comes up. For example, your fear of failure may consume you to the point where you're afraid to do things that will help you advance and shine in your career.

They may hold you back so much that you could lose your job for not appearing motivated or dedicated enough. You never saw that danger coming because you were obsessed with an irrational fear.

**Conclusion**

Franklin Roosevelt said, "The only thing that we have to fear is fear itself. Well, maybe not. Maybe we should embrace our good fears that are vital to our wellbeing. As long as they stay within the healthy range discussed here.

It's the bad, unhealthy gears that we should be afraid of and stay alert for. They can severely limit us, drain our emotional health and prevent us from having peace of mind.

So, learn to distinguish between your good and bad fears. Embrace the first type and nip the latter in the bud – they have no place in your life.