

Find Equilibrium And Rebalance (FEAR)

Fear is a fundamental aspect of **survival**, however, our natural intuitive survival response can often become confused with our **perceptions** of danger and when this is happening in teams or in relationships at work this can create **divisive and stressful communication**. Wholeheart Works is committed to educating individuals and organisations about these processes and offering ways to **transform** fear into a state of **equilibrium and balance**.

“We are not able to become true leaders until we become authentic individuals, and we are not able to become authentic individuals until we release our unconscious fears”

Richard Barrett
“Liberating The Corporate Soul”

THE EVOLUTION OF FEAR IN THE BRAIN.

We are constantly in relationship with the world and every moment our brains are processing millions of information megabytes.

The brain then needs some kind of **shorthand** to help it with this complicated task and research is showing that some aspects of the brain system have evolved to be hardwired for danger.

Researchers such as Dr Joseph LeDoux and others mentioned in his book “The Emotional Brain” have made huge contributions to the **study** of fear and its affect on the **mind/body** systems. He says:

“All animals have to protect themselves from dangerous situations in order to survive, and there are only a limited number of strategies that animals can call upon to deal with danger” (Joseph LeDoux, page 131, 1999)

LeDoux referring to the work of fear researcher Isaac Marks highlights these strategies as:

1. **Withdrawal** commonly known as **FLIGHT** and often manifested in **avoidance** behaviour.
2. **Immobility** where the whole system becomes **frozen** in a dangerous or predatory situation. This protects the organism from feeling pain during attack and if an animal is lucky the predator might think it is already dead and leave it. (e.g. as an inbuilt system, Lions will not eat an animal that is already dead, this **protects** them from eating rotten meat)
3. **Defensive aggression**, commonly known as the **FIGHT** response.

Fear is fundamental to
physical survival

Our brains are
hardwired to universal
and evolutionary patterns
of fear

And finally

4. **Submission** or appeasement.

MORE ABOUT FEAR

Fear is primarily a **complex response** fundamental to our **physical survival**. In order to make that split second fight or flight decision, the **wisdom** of the body means that our nervous systems are hardwired up to universal and evolutionary patterns of fear.

For example, rats exposed to a cat for the first time in lab conditions, exhibited the strategic fear responses of freezing or fleeing and where they felt under threat they moved into a defensive aggressive position to ultimately attack the cat. (source: “The Synaptic Self” by Joseph LeDoux)

A GIFT OF SURVIVAL

The fear response is a way of keeping us alive, it is the body’s gift to us and triggers a set of responses designed to utilise only the necessary systems in our body.

Studies in **Survival Stress Reaction (SSR)** with soldiers in combat situations suggest that there is both a physical and psychological affect, which includes:

- **Increased** heart rate
- **Loss of dexterity** and difficulty in **eye/hand co-ordination**
- **Dilation** in pupils of the eyes causing **tunnel vision**. In a real physical threat this causes the person to back up to get a good overview of the situation
- Diminished **hearing**
- Going into **automatic pilot** – not consciously thinking
- **Memory** loss
- **Dissociation** – feelings of fussiness or unreality
- Intrusive thoughts
- Time distortions
- **Paralysis** – or freezing.
- A state known as **hyper-vigilance** occurs which leads to a freezing state where the person finds themselves repeating cycles or being paralysed

Fear also manifests in what we might call **intuition** or a **gut instinct** that something just does not feel right. This is the nervous system picking up **subtle information**, which our conscious mind does not recognise.

This is a **vital** aspect of survival and can be seen in all **animals**, if **danger** lurks nearby. This state is known as “**hyper alert**”, where all the senses are attuned. They will **orientate** towards the area of the danger, and if the danger passes they usually go back to resting or grazing.

Lessons from Nature

Think of the local neighbourhood tomcat, its fur on full electric shock mode, hissing at a potential territory invader. Once the intruder is scared off, the cat spends the afternoon resting in the warm sun.

During this time, its **nervous system** re-connects to a resting space and a state of **equilibrium**. If we do not allow our nervous system to **rest** and reconnect with a sense of **spaciousness**, we are likely to constantly be in a contracted state and 'on charge'. This can be a dangerous cocktail of **neuro-emotional biology** swimming around our systems, which over a long period of time, can have **serious** impact.

You are an animal!

Your Nervous System
needs time or a technique
that will help it to
recover and find
equilibrium

THE COST OF MIS-PERCEIVED FEAR

Having seen how important the fear response is for our survival. It is important to understand how excess fear in the system can be detrimental to the individual and the impact it can have on others around them.

In organic or biological terms then, **fear** should only really **manifest** when there is **actual** threat to our **physical entity** and in theory when the **threat disappears** the fear should **recede** too unless we find ourselves in a similar situation.

Modern life unfortunately it is not as simple as that. Fear is **connected** to what and how we **perceive** our world and this is where the opportunity for change lies.

Creating freedom around
fear and our perceptions
creates tremendous
opportunity for change

More energy is available to
work collaboratively and
focus on what we really
want to achieve

Our brains often **trip switch** a **past** experience which may have been unpleasant, dangerous, fearful or traumatic and layer it **onto** a **present** situation. We will then **link** all the emotions, images and sensations from that event to present time.

For example, a person at work unconsciously reminds us of someone who bullied us at school, simply being afraid to challenge someone in authority. However, if pilot is about to make a fatal mistake and the co-pilot is too afraid to challenge authority, then the consequences of that fear could be devastating.

In a fear based organisational or community culture each individual is working to protect their own survival

At Wholeheart Works we help organisations, teams and individuals understand the processes and effect of fear on collaborative communication. We inspire and support them to discover how to free their vital energy resources to transform fear into wholeheartedness, integrate wellbeing in business and exercise **Holistic Social Responsibility**.

Our services portfolio includes Holistic Social Responsibility internal brand consultancy, stress management solutions, facilitation, coaching, workshops, therapeutic interventions and e-learning solutions. To find out more information about our services contact Wholeheart Works on 020 8566 4350 or e-mail info@wholeheartworks.com or visit www.wholeheartworks.com