

FIVE PROVEN STEPS TO CREATING COURAGE



courage
to be *brave*

BY TEGAN MARSHALL

This book is dedicated to those who have let fear hold them back far too long. May you find the way to your courage and become brave enough to take that next step forward in the direction of your purpose. The world needs your gift.

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Introduction

I used to be so brave! As a child, there wasn't much I was afraid of. I had the self-confidence within that I could do anything I set my mind to. There was no problem I couldn't find a solution to. No challenge that seemed impossible to achieve. So, what happened.

By the time I was in my thirties I was onto my fourth successful business venture. From the outside looking in I was a walking success story. But inside I was crumbling. My head was filled with self-doubt, worry, stress and anxiety. I was second guessing my choices, abilities and decisions. My fears were beginning to take over my mind.

Thankfully, on a flight to Los Angeles I found a book on fear at the airport called Fearless Living by Rhonda Britten. By the time I arrived in LA I had finished that book and thus began my quest to learn everything there is to know about fear.

I wanted to understand where my childhood courage had gone and how I could get it back. I was on a mission to master what I needed to know to be brave again. How I could build my self-confidence and banish all the unnecessary stress, self-doubt and worry. I was determined to conquer my fears.

Since then I have devoured hundreds of books, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on courses and learning, tested my own boundaries regularly beyond my comfort zone and supported clients to do the same.

All that I've learned can't be squeezed into this little book, but it is my hope that you find the information in these pages helpful and that it may support you to re-discover the courage you have always had. The courage you deserve to have. The courage to be brave.

With love, always *Tegan Marshall xo*

MEET YOUR AMYGDALA

Although as human beings we think we have evolved, there are still several things we share with the beloved animals of this earth. Like us, most animals have a heart, lungs, veins filled with blood, and a brain that controls their emotions and behaviours.

The most primitive part of our brain is also what we share with all mammals. It's called the Limbic System. In humans, this system includes the Hippocampus which files our memories, the Hypothalamus, which decides what actions need to be taken, and the Amygdalae, which interprets situations and determines 'appropriate' actions.

In short, the instinctive function of the Limbic System is to keep us alive long enough to breed. Thus, retaining the continuation of the species. The more detailed version is that the interacting areas of the Limbic System are involved in motivation, emotion, learning, and memory.

There are two almond shaped Amygdala located in the temporal (side) lobes of our brain. They have one job, and that is to keep us safe. They tell us what to do to keep ourselves out of danger. To do this quickly they rely on instinct and re-activating past significant emotional events.

You may have heard the phrase "fight or flight". When something big and loud is thundering towards you (like an angry elephant or an out of control truck), you're probably already running before you even know what it is. That's the efficiency of your Amygdala in action.

The Amygdala takes over to keep you alive. Telling your adrenal glands to instantly pump adrenaline into your system so you have what you need to either: stay and "fight" the enemy or "flight" - get yourself out of there fast.

This reaction, and many more like it are built into the deepest, most instinctive part of our brain. That is your Amygdala. The problem is, what was useful in primitive times has limited use in today's world. Or does it?

It could be pretty handy to get you to jump up on the curb when a taxi tries to take you out on a crossing don't you think? And it could be an advantage when you are driving to make you more alert of other "not so great" drivers right? Or if you ever find yourself in a dark alley or a war zone then it would be an advantage I think too.

So, while "everything" might not be life or death anymore like it was in prehistoric days, having a part of your brain on duty to keep you a little cautious, isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Except, it is.

It's your Amygdala that stops you from being brave. It's your Amygdala that crushes your courage. It does this by creating fear.

Our own worst enemy

Like I said earlier, it's your Amygdalae's job to protect you, no matter what! Consequently, every experience we have is filtered through the Amygdala to determine if it is a threat or not.

What's supposed to happen is two other important parts of the Limbic System (the Sensory Cortex and the Hippocampus) are supposed to process the stimuli that comes from the outside world first. They are to 'check in' with the Amygdala to determine if it is a threat or not. Then send out instructions to the body via the Hypothalamus (also part of the Limbic System) as to the appropriate actions that should be taken for that situation.

Sounds simple, right? The problem is, it often, even before the Sensory Cortex and the Hippocampus have had time to formulate all of the stimuli, the Amygdala jumps in, signals "FEAR" and detours straight past them, directly to the Hypothalamus, which is all about taking action.

You can't blame your Amygdala though. Consider how much stimuli they have to deal with on a daily basis. Everything we see, smell, touch, hear and taste. It has to be efficient, otherwise it wouldn't be able to protect us.

For example, being chased by a rabid wolf? Not the time to stop and think too hard and long about what to do, right? You need to take action immediately and get out of there fast. This is when it's a good idea for the Amygdala to go directly to the Hypothalamus with the fear signal and yell "action".

Getting only one offer on selling your car for half the price you asked? That is an excellent time to stop and think things over. But instead, your Amygdala sees a potential danger, and it won't let you stop and think. It's designed to make you react quickly. Efficiently. And to protect you.

If you're afraid there will be no more offers for your car, or if you're afraid there is not going to be another opportunity at work, or no-one else left for a relationship, or whatever it may be. There's no option to think things through. Your Amygdala senses fear and screams *act now!* Often to long-term regret.

But how can this be avoided? How can you manage your Amygdala? Let me show you how I have managed to control mine.

Amy the Fear Monkey®

There's a little voice that shows up when we are about to step outside our comfort zone. Or even if we are just considering taking the step. We all have it. It's familiar, incessant and it knows us well.

It tells us when something is too risky, or if something is too dangerous, that you *shouldn't* do it? That you might fail. That you might get hurt. It's actually your Amygdala talking.

It's what fills your head with negative thoughts and self-doubt. It's what can often hold you back from being courageous. From being your brave true self.

When you're looking to make a change, to put your hand up for a promotion, to tell someone you love them. When you are about to reach out past your current 'comfortable' and attempt to achieve something new. That doubt that turns into fear, that's an emotional response created by, you guessed it... your Amygdala.

It doesn't mean to ruin things for you though. In fact, your Amygdala has the best intentions. Much like a best friend would. But the bottom line is, it takes its job of protecting you very, very seriously.

Like I said earlier, it will do whatever is necessary to protect you. Often using your thoughts, emotions, and beliefs to manipulate you in the direction away from the perceived risk.

I have a special name for mine that has enabled me to respect what it does, listen to what it is telling me, and even use it to move me forward rather than let it hold me back.

Let me introduce you to: Amy the Fear Monkey®.

Amy the Fear Monkey® is my Amygdala. She resides in my brain with all the other 'drunk monkeys' Buddha speaks of in his teachings. Swinging from thought to thought and constantly chattering.

Being the Fear Monkey® though, she is the loudest and most controlling of all the monkeys. Not in a nasty way, but because she has the most important job of all...keeping me alive.

Amy the Fear Monkey® is kept busy filtering every experience and quickly and efficiently telling the rest of the monkey's how to respond. She uses them when she needs them. She especially loves using the Guilt Monkey, Shame Monkey, and Doubt Monkey.

Amy the Fear Monkey® is as smart as I am (because she is part of me). She is controlling (because she has to be). And, she knows my past experiences,

doubts and fears (because she's the one who categorised and filed them away).

So much of what Amy the Fear Monkey® does is instinctive. Reactive. Based on history. She does her best to protect me by making assumptions, jumping to conclusions, and having expectations. But so often she gets it wrong.

So, when I hear that voice, you know the one. It says things like:

"That's too risky."

"What if I fail?"

"What if I go broke?"

"What will people think of me?"

"What about my retirement fund?"

"That's a crazy pipe dream."

"You shouldn't take chances!"

I know it's Amy the Fear Monkey®. Sitting on my shoulder jabbering in my ear. Sharing her fears, her concerns, and her worries. Trying to protect me from a potential fall. What I also know though, is that I cannot be successful if I continually let her be in control.

You see, people who succeed are people who take risks. Period. So, if you aren't willing to be brave and take a risk, there's a big chance it's going to cost you in the success department. Big time.

Take a look at the successful people around you, or even famous ones. People who are successful have often lost vast fortunes on the chances they've taken. The difference is, they don't let that stop them. They keep going, and that's when the next risk pays off.

If you always end up listening to your Fear Monkey®, giving in to the doubts she fills your head with. That, my friend, will keep you exactly as you are right now. Stuck! And afraid.

And I know you don't want that. Otherwise, you wouldn't be reading this book right now.

I know you want more. I know you want to have the courage to succeed. I know you want to be brave and in control of your Fear Monkey®. The good news is, that you can. You can manage your Fear Monkey® and be in control of your life.

Keep in mind, these instinctive reactions are deeply embedded. This means they aren't going to change overnight. In fact, our Fear Monkey® is designed to fight change and to run from challenges. So, you certainly won't find it easy. But it can definitely be done.

As Nelson Mandela said,

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

That conquering Nelson Mandela speaks of is the reprogramming. Or in the case of Amy the Fear Monkey®, let's call it retraining. Every time you conquer a fear, you are retraining her. Piece by piece you can stretch yours (and hers) comfort zones. You don't want her to go away completely though (and she never will).

We still need our Fear Monkey® on duty for those important moments when we really *are* in danger. This is why we need to listen to her and take action only when we truly need to —when there is real danger ahead.

Only then will we find the success we crave and consequently the courage to be brave.

The Problem with Amy

How often do you look forward to something that absolutely scares the bee-gee-bees out of you? I'm going to take a guess and say, not very often.

Do you ever expect that a frightening situation is going to turn out positively great? Chances are, unless you're an aficionado of haunted houses, probably not.

Amy the Fear Monkey® does not have a bright side. Fear doesn't have a happy ending. She will *only* see the downside, the disaster waiting to happen, the pit that opens under your feet. That's her job. That's what she's there to do.

It's not possible for your Fear Monkey® to be able to see the success at the end of the journey. Or the benefits that taking that risk can bring. It's just not in her DNA. Her job is to warn you of all the possible dangers (and even make some up too) and protect you from harm.

- Ready to make a speech? What if you mumble or forget the words?
- Ready to go on a date? What if they don't like you or you get hurt?
- Ready to get that promotion? What if the new job is too much for you to handle?

Amy the Fear Monkey® does this. Instead of knowing that you're going to have the audience's rapt attention. Or imagining you might meet that one person you've always dreamed of. Amy the Fear Monkey® will have you thinking the complete opposite.

Instead of celebrating the opportunity of that corner office, or the difference you can make to your family with that promotion, she will only let you see the pitfalls and traps. And they will grow larger and larger by the minute.

Often to make a point, Amy the Fear Monkey® will exaggerate. She will recall past situations and replay them in a more heightened state in a desperate plea for you to see the danger. This is how she controls you, if you let her.

The familiar keeps us ‘safe’

Animals and humans are so similar at times. Often animals kept in cages too long, even abused ones, will fight to remain in their cages when finally offered freedom. Why? Because their small cage is familiar to them and they know what to expect.

Fear of the unknown has them believing that whatever lies beyond that small enclosure is far too big, too grand and too frightening even to consider. They are afraid they can’t handle it.

It's much the same reason as to why people will remain in abusive relationships. Or why they will work relentlessly in dead-end jobs with bad employers. Human beings (as with animals) will stay where they are, with the ill-treatment, because it’s familiar to them. Because it feels ‘safe’.

Your Fear Monkey® will have you believe that the fear of the unknown is often much scarier than the certainty of where we already are. That’s how our she keeps us safe. By convincing us of things that aren’t necessarily true.

She will use that fear to keep us from leaving, from asking for help, or from striking out on our own when we can no longer tolerate the life we have. Amy the Fear Monkey® keeps us “safe,” even when we are not at all safe. That’s how strong of a hold she can have over us. If we let her.

Helen Keller put it this way:

“Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold.”

Often the reality is that we are 'caught' more often, and quicker if we don't face our fears. If we don't stand up to our Fear Monkey®. But to do so, requires the courage to be brave.

Let's look at what stops us from having that courage to be brave.

The fear of rejection from the tribe

In our primitive minds, worst-case scenario, we have been conditioned genetically to believe that if we stray from the pack then we are at a higher risk of being eaten by the lion.

Amy the Fear Monkey®, the same part of the brain that dictates fight or flight, also understands that there is safety in numbers. A group of people united can fight a larger enemy than one single person can.

In caveman days, taking a risk meant the possibility of being an outcast from the tribe. Something that would almost assure an early death. Today we still have those 'tribes' where we strive to remain, although they may look a little different than the tribes of old.

We all have an innate fear of being rejected from 'the tribe'. That we will be judged for standing out or doing things differently. Our Fear Monkey® warns us; What if I make a fool of myself at work? What if my friends don't like me anymore and don't want me around? What if my presentation is so bad I get fired? She fills our head with "What if...what if...what if...!"

Even some people who have been married for decades will still hesitate to ask for something they want or need for fear their spouse might reject them. "What if she laughs at what I've asked for?" "What if he/she thinks I am inadequate because I asked?"

Too often we don't step outside our comfort zone, put our hand up for a promotion, or ask for what we need because of the fear of rejection from the

tribe. This is one way our Amy the Fear Monkey® keeps us 'safe' and playing small.

Knowing and understanding this fear will help us to recognise when our Fear Monkey® tries to use it against us. When we are about to do something out of the ordinary. Something new and innovative.

The fear of failing

Socially we are conditioned not to try something unless we already know we will excel at it. Learning to play an instrument, for example, is done in secret, or at the very least, practiced alone.

We are led to believe that if we can't sit at a piano and play like a master, then it's best to pass it by or wait until we have the privacy needed to make the necessary mistakes. We are expected to only present ourselves in public once we are proficient at something. Because, what if you make a fool of yourself?

But what if you fail? What if you fall flat on your face on the red carpet? What if you mix up the notes and it doesn't sound quite right? Does it really matter? And if so, to who? And why?

Your Fear Monkey® would have you think that if any of these things happened you would surely die. But the reality is, you will survive. You just might be a little embarrassed and that has never killed anyone.

Maybe we're all a little more paranoid than we should be because in this day and age of social media possibly our 'terrible' mistake could be shared, for the world to see. Worse than that, if it's spectacular enough, there's even a chance it could go viral. In that case, you're suddenly the fool, and people will see you as a flawed human being. Is that really true though? Or would they just see you as real?

Of course, we tend to forget that for the most part, no one actually cares. We're all too busy just getting through our own lives, fears and challenges.

Unless you're a big-name celebrity then you tripping and falling is hardly going to wind up on the nightly news. Or across Facebook for that matter.

Yet we still worry, don't we? Sometimes our Fear Monkey® has us so afraid of failing that we don't even begin. Many a great business idea has never seen the light of day because of their Fear Monkey® convincing them that the fear of failing was worse than the possibility of succeeding.

Our Fear Monkey® convinces us that 'If at first, you can't succeed, it's best not to try.' We tend to forget though, that trying, and failing is how we become proficient at something.

You cannot play the piano like a master if you don't ever play at all. Yes, there are risks, not to mention a whole lot of practice, private or otherwise, to become proficient. But if you let your Fear Monkey® stop you before you even get out the gate, then you're never going to be able to express yourself in new and wonderful ways. And that will mean a life of regrets.

Strengthening your courage muscle

You are probably starting to get the idea that if you continue listening to your Fear Monkey®, it will eventually prevent you from realizing your potential. This is when you just go through the motions of living, but with no real direction or sense of satisfaction. You just exist.

If your Fear Monkey® had its way it would keep you in bed under the blankets and generally immobile if it could. But humans cannot grow in such an environment. Muscles unused atrophy and become unusable. We must keep moving forward both mentally and physically.

It's just like at the gym, through effort and putting pressure on muscles they develop and strengthen. The five-pound weight you started with during your workout regime becomes less of a challenge after a while. As human beings, we adapt. More weight or more reps must be added to challenge the muscle growth continually.

It's the same in life. Through trial and error, stress and pressure we grow. We fail. Often. That's part of the process. And it's a necessary part of growth and fulfillment.

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook put it this way:

"The biggest risk is not taking any risk... In a world that's changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks."

Without risk, without stretching our comfort zone, we too will atrophy. Where letting your Fear Monkey® take over is a wonderful thing if you're being attacked by a Mastodon, in today's world, if you let it, it can also be what leads to a slow and painful demise.

The physical effects of fear

In the stone age, and even up to recent times in some parts of the world, the 'fight or flight' response discussed earlier was a valid response to living in dangerous times. In times of war, the fight or flight kicks in to save your life. If you found yourself lost in the wild, that response might even save your life.

In today's world, the dangers come less from monsters in the woods, and more from corporate relations, personal relationships, or even from traffic. The problem is, there truly is no one to 'fight' and running away isn't an option when you're stuck in a cubicle or trapped in traffic on the expressway.

According to Pamela Peeke, an assistant clinical professor of medicine at the University of Maryland "in our stressed-out world, the fight-or-flight response that kept our ancestors alive has turned into a 'stew and chew,'".

If you've been triggered in response to a perceived threat and you are all fired up and ready for a big confrontation and physically there is no action, the high levels of stress hormones can have a very physical effect on the body.

If you are experiencing this on a regular basis, like so many of us do in the stress filled environments we live in, Mary D. Moller PhD director of Psychiatric Services at Northwest Centre for Integrated Health says the potential effects of chronic fear on physical health include:

- Headaches turning into migraines
- Muscle aches turning into fibromyalgia
- Body aches turning into chronic pain
- Difficulty breathing turning into asthma

According to the university of Minnesota when we sense a potential danger, regardless of whether it is real or perceived, the body releases hormones to shut down functions not needed for survival such as the digestive system and sharpen others that we do need such as our heart rate.

The university of Minnesota goes on to state that chronic fear can weaken the immune system and cause IBS, ulcers, long-term memory damage, fatigue, and negatively affect our decision making and mental health.

So, I think it's safe to say living in fear is not a good way to live and is counter-intuitive toward growing into a well-adjusted, happy and healthy human being.

I can almost guarantee that after reading the above information you will also agree. But understanding fear is only half the battle. The real question comes next. What can you do about it?

HOW FACING FEARS CREATES COURAGE

If Amy the Fear Monkey® is so powerful and deeply ingrained, how can we possibly get around her and find the courage to be brave? She is at the core of absolutely everything our brains take in and her reactions a lot of the time are automatic.

But this can be changed. And I'm living proof that it can. No, I'm not talking about having brain surgery to have your Amygdala removed. Instead, we're going to look at something a lot less painful. I'm going to help you reprogram your Fear Monkey® so that instead of you serving it, she is going to start working for *YOU*.

What you need to realize is that Amy the Fear Monkey® is still a necessity to have around. We require that fight or flight response – very legitimately.

She is what keeps us alert when we're out jogging alone at night. Helps us to jump out of the way if we're about to be hit by a bus. So, while all of those instant reactions still need to be there, it's your response to the stimuli that needs to change.

That's what will enable you to alter the outcome. When you realize you don't have reason to fear after all. In other words, how you react to fear will begin to change the way you experience fear. That, in turn, will change the hold your Fear Monkey® currently has on you.

You've probably heard over and over again that the only way to conquer fear is to face it. But that doesn't mean living a life without fear either, as that's going too far in the opposite direction (and it's impossible to live a fulfilling life and be completely fearless). Remember, some fear is necessary.

What we need to do is to reprogram how you react to Amy the Fear Monkey®. To reach past the fight or flight and to use fear instead to get ahead and accomplish what you most desire.

Stage actors are trained to use the fear of walking out on a stage to heighten the energy of the performance. They use that fight or flight adrenaline to vocalize and to play the part with more passion and energy than they might have otherwise been able to.

Using the fear response in positive ways can help change your life. How? Let's find out.

Increases your brain power

Like any muscle in the body, if you challenge it, it will get stronger. The brain is no different. If you challenge it, it will grow.

The best way to challenge it is to learn new ways to do things and to have new experiences that challenge the status quo. You know the saying, 'knowledge is power'. Learning increases neuroplasticity meaning that the brain becomes more agile and will make new neuron connections much more efficiently.

As a side note, at one time, there was a theory that once you reached a certain age, you could not change those neuron connections. This was proven to be very wrong. No matter what age you are, it's always possible to learn more. And learning more is what increases the brain's power.

So, when it comes to fear the best place to start is with the realization that facing your fears requires a new way of thinking. Begin with the idea that risk is not inherently bad, and that change is not dangerous. That alone might take some time to wrap your head around because it goes against a lot of what you were raised to believe.

After all, every school child is taught first to do things the same way everyone else before them has done those very same things. Workplaces can very easily sink into this same mindset. Have you ever been part of an organization that has done things a certain way because 'that's the way we've always done it'?

How did that feel for you? Especially if you could see a better, more efficient or more profitable way to do it. Frustrating right! Was it empowering to work in that environment? I am going to take an educated guess and say it wouldn't have been.

Imagine instead if the environment had been one that welcomed new and innovative ideas. You could have put forward your suggestions and they would have been tested and evaluated. How much better would that have felt. That's what I want you to do here with your fears.

Keep in mind that thinking outside the box is what leads to growth. And trying something in a new way is more likely to have a new result than just doing the same thing you've always done.

Now it may get a bit messy as you venture into new territories. But remember, just because something is messy or difficult doesn't mean it's bad. Facing fear means learning about alternatives, getting curious and thinking about things in a different way. That's what's going to change the neuro pathways and your reaction to fear.

In the end, it's *good* to try new things. And believe it or not, the world won't even explode. In other words, it isn't going to hurt you or be as bad as your Fear Monkey® is making you think it is. Keep your eye on the goal.

Now, like any new venture or exploration, afterward you're going to want to take time to assess. What happened when you tried things that new way? Was it rough? Maybe. But in all likelihood it was survivable, and maybe even something good came from it. Be realistic and look at what worked and what could be improved next time.

Remember, being locked into the comfort zone cage or hiding under a rock to preserve the status quo does not lead to knowledge and growth. It will never lend itself to you having the courage to be brave. Facing fear does.

It feels good

Now I know you know what it's like to be afraid. Otherwise you wouldn't be reading this book. You sweat, you can't breathe, your heart races, and blood pounds in your ears. Your muscles tense and shake. These are not pleasant sensations.

However, much of the time, giving in to fear is a combination of avoiding risk and simply trying to get rid of the symptoms of fear itself.

Facing fears has a similar physical effect on the body. When you face your fears and succeed at conquering them, your body releases chemicals such as endorphins, oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin.

These are the 'feel good' chemicals. It's the sort of rush that adrenaline junkies get when they're base jumping off a bridge or zip-lining at top speed through a forest.

The good news is that you don't have to take up an adrenaline sport to experience these same benefits. When you conquer your fears (large or small) this is what happens naturally in your body.

What you need to understand, is that this "feel good" chemical effect lasts much longer and is usually more intense than the ill-feeling effects of the fear. So not only is facing fears healthy, it can get downright addictive.

Don't worry, you're not necessarily going to take up jumping off a mountain in a flying suit as a new profession any time soon (unless that's something you've always wanted to do).

What will happen though is your comfort zone is going to expand with each fear you face and you are going to like it because of the positive effects it has on your body. The feeling of freedom it gives you. That's what's addictive about it, and it's a healthy addiction to have.

It's a great sign post

If you're anxious about something, it's difficult to ignore it and you shouldn't. Your fear is trying to tell you something and you need to take the time to listen to it and determine what it has to say.

Channel the energy of the fear into figuring out why you're feeling apprehensive. What is it trying to tell you? Acknowledging your fear will not only dissipate its power but it also gives you the opportunity to do something positive to redirect it.

You have instincts; you have judgment if you will only listen to your feelings. Fear is a feeling. It's telling you that there is something about this moment that isn't right or healthy or productive.

There's always an element of your fear that's a sign post trying to warn you. Look for the reason behind the fear to find the answers. Slow down before you take that next turn.

For example, if you're suffering from anxiety due to an upcoming test, does that perhaps mean you haven't studied enough? If you're anxious about presenting a report during a meeting at work, does that mean that maybe you're not well prepared?

Use fear as a sign post, a divining rod. Let it point out the problems and identify the areas that need work. Just don't let it have the reins.

It allows the benefits of vulnerability to occur

Amy the Fear Monkey® was created to keep us, among other things, from becoming vulnerable. To protect us from the perceived pain that being vulnerable can cause. The problem is, vulnerability is the birthplace of creativity and innovation.

Dr. Brené Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston and best-selling author, put it this way, “Vulnerability is not weakness. And that myth is profoundly dangerous.” She further went on to express how it is from that place of vulnerability that growth occurs.

Being vulnerable in the jungle might not be a wise choice, but not being vulnerable to a loved one or a partner will create a chasm between you that may be insurmountable. It’s impossible to love without being vulnerable.

Too many people have pushed someone away because they were afraid they would leave them, only to create that very situation. Remember earlier when I talked about what you are afraid of you attract or create. In doing so they may have missed the opportunity to find the one person who wouldn’t have left them in the first place.

So, by not having the courage to be brave enough to be vulnerable, it can cost you. It’s a risk that needs to be taken. And it’s one that isn’t going to kill you. I promise.

Yes, there’s a chance you might get hurt but more often than not, by having the courage to be vulnerable you get to experience the most incredible things. Like true love. Because you allow the other person to be vulnerable too. So, basically, it’s a risk worth taking.

It makes you take action and have a backup plan

There are legitimate fears, of course. There is the fear of being attacked in a dark ally, the fear of getting fired, the fear of falling short. These fears are not to be dismissed Use them to be prepared and to form a backup plan.

Many companies have an emergency data plan. What would happen if all the servers failed or were hacked or flooded? Because of these real contingencies, data is backed up, saved off-site and preserved with an emergency restoration plan.

If you're afraid of losing your job, take note of the sign post and take action. What can you do to improve your standing within the company? How can you improve your results?

Then use your fear to make contingencies. Begin saving for an emergency, look at what requirements you need to find another position. What opportunities are available to you outside of the company you are with?

If you're afraid of losing a major client, ask yourself what's missing. What can you do to provide more value or more of what they are looking for? Is there a new product you can create that you could also sell to other clients? Look for the opportunities.

In addition to that, utilize the warning your fear is giving you to create a contingency plan that doesn't rely so heavily on a single customer. How can you diversify your portfolio of clients? Can you cut costs to ensure that if they left the damage will be minimal?

Being prepared creates confidence so use your Fear Monkey® to become more prepared. Having a back-up plan creates a sense of security. This too will grow your confidence and together creates the courage to be brave.

You can inspire and be inspired

You know how fear feels? So, say we all. Everyone knows what it's like to be paralyzed with fear because there isn't a person on this planet who hasn't been afraid at some point in their life.

Everyone has felt the familiar tremors, shortness of breath and the racing heart. Everyone has let it stop them or hold them back at least once in their life. It's something you have in common with every person alive. So, you are not alone.

That's nice to know but how is that a good thing? I'm glad you asked. Facing fear will connect you with others in two ways.

By having the courage to face your own fears, you might wind up inspiring someone else to do the same. When you sympathize and share your own story, you help others to see that they are not alone.

Facing fear increases your awareness and levels of compassion and your ability to offer consolation. Helping others through their fears is a strong motivator toward succeeding in facing fears of your own too.

Secondly, knowing that there are others (like every other person you know and meet) who are afraid makes you more aware of others who are facing their own fears. Seeing the people around you facing their fears, might, in turn, also inspire you.

It creates resilience

Facing fear creates resilience and you need resilience to be courageous. As you face your fears you will rise above them. You will become stronger, less controlled by your Fear Monkey®.

Mastering your fears gives you the courage to be brave. It makes you tougher and gives you the chance to grow in ways you haven't even thought of yet.

Some people appear to coast through life seem to be always on a wave. The chances are that these people don't have it any easier, they've just become more resilient, more used to conquering fear and self-doubt.

Facing your fears will not only unblock the way for you to grow and to succeed, but it has many health benefits across the spectrum - physical, mental, and emotional. By facing your fears you will become stronger in all of these areas and consequently more resilient.

We all have fear, we all experience it. What you do with it is what makes the difference.

Don't let an emotion from the smallest part of your mind rule you. You are so much more than your Amygdala. Use your Fear Monkey® to create good. To prepare you and to create the courage you need to be brave.

You don't have to be ruled by a tiny little piece of your brain any longer. And while you can't deny fear or pretend it's not there, you can give it its proper place in your life. After all, fear is important - sometimes. But it's just one tiny piece of who you are.

*“All our dreams can come true, if we
have the courage to pursue them”*

- - Walt Disney

THE 5-STEP COURAGE CREATING SYSTEM

To create the courage to be brave you need to be able to manage your Fear Monkey® so that she isn't in control, instead you are in control of her.

Courage is the result of mastering your Fear Monkey®. You can never be completely fearless. It's not possible because there is a reason for having your Fear Monkey®. Sometimes she keeps us alive. She can certainly keep us from ruin but she can also ruin us.

Fear lives in our genetic makeup from prehistoric times and although we are no longer chased by lions (most of us anyway) we still need it. It's what keeps us from touching a hot stove or crossing against the light when walking to work.

But fear is also often irrational and nearly always immediate. Your Fear Monkey® doesn't have room for specifics. In the forest, it didn't matter if the scary part of that saber-tooth tiger was the immense fangs or the six-inch claws. The size of the *cat* was enough to make a person run.

Therefore, in order to create courage what we need to do is to find some way to retrain our Fear Monkey® so that she filters our experiences through rational thought. Practicing facing our fears is the application of that kind of filter to every aspect of our lives.

While it certainly doesn't mean grabbing that hot burner on the stove. That's not facing fear, that just plain stupid. What it does mean is understanding *why* the fear is there in the first place. In this case it's saving a third-degree burn.

So, by being able to determine what your Fear Monkey® is trying to tell you, and taking the time to evaluate it rationally, you are better able to handle the effects and consequently you will become more courageous.

The real question though, is how exactly do we set about retraining Amy our Fear Monkey® in order to create the courage we need to be brave.

Below I have outlined my five-step Courage Creating System to face your fears and build your courage muscle. I have used this process not only for myself but also my many clients who have wanted to become more courageous and brave.

Use it again and again whenever your Fear Monkey® tries stopping you from doing something your heart truly wants to do.

1. Acknowledge your Fear Monkey®

The worst thing you can do is try to ignore Amy your Fear Monkey®. She is doing something important and ignoring her will only make her scream louder. Give your Fear Monkey® a moment of your time and acknowledge she is trying to tell you something of value. The suppressed emotion is always the one that takes over.

Let your fears be heard and understood. Write them down so that your fears can be aired and processed. Sometimes seeing them in black and white can be enough to dissipate the power of the Fear Monkey®. Remember, knowledge equals power and awareness is knowledge.

Try to avoid using a computer when you write out your fears. Choose the old-fashioned way of pen and paper for this process. Studies have shown that the mind retains things better that are written out by hand. This means the process will have a more lasting effect on you.

Ask yourself the question, “what is it I am truly afraid of” and keep asking this until you feel you have gotten to the real fears. Dig deeper to uncover those deep-set fears that have stopped you from being brave for so long.

By allowing the fear to be heard and understood, it’s less likely to become the mountainous obstacle that it has been in the past. Sometimes overcoming a fear can be as simple as admitting it. So, acknowledge the fear, but don’t let it dictate your reaction.

Sometimes your Fear Monkey® will try to stop you from digging deeper to the real fear because it's afraid it might be painful. The reality is, discovering it will bring you freedom from fear and it's what you need to do to uncover your courage.

Take a moment to recognize your Fear Monkey® was just trying to protect you and thank it for doing so. After all, it's just trying to keep you alive, safe and secure. That's what it's there for, and that is its only job.

Plus, gratitude and fear cannot co-exist so by being grateful for your Fear Monkey® it will also reduce its power over you and enable your courage to shine through.

2. Recognise the cost

As human beings, we are programmed to move away from pain and towards pleasure. This in part is why we avoid facing our fears.

It's your Fear Monkey®'s key job to protect you from being hurt in any way. This includes both physical and emotional pain. Plus, it's not too big of a fan of feeling uncomfortable either.

Therefore, for this next part of the Courage To Be Brave process your Fear Monkey® is probably going to try and get you to avoid it. You may find you procrastinate on this step. Suddenly the dishes need doing, or your cupboards need a spring clean.

However, sometimes it is necessary to step momentarily into that uncomfortable zone in order to achieve great things. This is one of those times.

You see, if we don't remind ourselves of what having this fear has cost us, there's a big possibility that we might never change. This would mean that you remain in the same situation you are currently in. Stuck in your fears.

You know that old saying, “Better the devil you know”. Well, your Fear Monkey® lives by that saying. Your Fear Monkey® would rather you stay with the unhappy feelings you have. Living your life as a scared little mouse. Rather than go through a little bit of discomfort to make a change.

So, what we need to do is to show your Fear Monkey® that the current situation is actually more painful than the process of facing your fear. Much more painful!

By doing this, you will be able to get your Fear Monkey® on side with the whole being courageous program. This will give you the best chance for lasting change and the brave new life you dream of.

This is why you need to look at what having this fear has cost you in your life so far. What opportunities have you said no to because of this fear. Who have you ignored, dismissed, rejected, or avoided because of this fear. Who have you hurt because of this fear.

And if you want to take it to the next level, you can even look at what it will cost you in the future if you don’t deal with it now. How will it affect your health, your mental attitude, your happiness? What impact will it have on your goals?

Just as an important side note here, this is NOT an opportunity to beat yourself up! This is simply an observation, like a helicopter hovering over your past. I don’t want you to dive into each and every experience and re-live the pain. That’s not necessary. You’ve lived it once, that is enough. Now use it for the good of this exercise.

3. Focus on the good

This next step is my favourite. I love imagining and creating and this is where you get to do both. We are going to flip the negative thoughts of the past over and focus on what your future is going to be like as a courageous and brave new you.

Now I want you to think about how your life would be if you were to master this fear you have chosen. If this fear was no longer holding you back what would you do differently? How would you behave? What would you say? Who could you become?

Think about what opportunities might come your way as the brave new you. No longer afraid and instead, quietly confident in your ability to be courageous. Brave enough to put up your hand for that promotion. Bold enough to offer to do a speech on your subject of expertise.

This is where you get to really let go and dream about how your life could be as your courage muscle gets stronger and stronger. Really let your imagination go free because once you have freedom from this fear that's exactly how you will be...free.

This part of the process is important to do because it is firstly giving you a goal. Secondly it is creating all the ammunition you will need to keep your Fear Monkey® on your side as you take the steps to face your fear. This will ensure you don't fall backwards or lose your way. So flip that fear pancake over and take a look at how your new life is going to be.

4. Create an Action Plan

Fear is an indicator. It's a warning, a sign post, a signal that something is wrong, potentially wrong, or could go wrong. Fear exists to enable you to prepare or alter the coming issue.

Facing your fear begins with focusing on what scares you but once you have uncovered what your Fear Monkey® was trying to warn you about you get to determine how you are going to react to it. This puts you in control rather than your Fear Monkey® controlling you.

Ask yourself what action do you need to take, if any? Do you need to prepare in some way? Then make a plan to accommodate those requirements. Write it

down and add the steps you need to take into your diary. Then your Fear Monkey® knows you are serious and it can relax knowing you have it sorted.

For example, if you are feeling anxious about visiting your relatives? Ask yourself why and get very specific. Which relative, in particular, makes you anxious? What do you expect to happen? Maybe you're dreading another lecture from your mother-in-law. Or is it the uncle that's always needing to borrow money?

Maybe you dread the criticism and judgement from that great aunt who disapproves of the way you dress? What specific detail is holding you back from attending that family reunion with confidence and courage? What's stopping you from being brave?

Once you understand the reasons for the fear, you can make your plan to resolve the situation before it even begins. You can rehearse what you're going to say to your mother-in-law. You can leave your wallet in the car, so you can honestly tell your uncle that you haven't a dime on you.

Write down and practice that snappy comeback for the fashion-blind great aunt. Or at the very least set up a strategy to practice your diplomacy. No matter what the case, once you've discovered the thing that's causing the anxiety, now you can carve out the plan that's going to take it right out of the picture.

Maybe you are afraid of public speaking? Who isn't right! That's one of the most common fears the world over. But what part of it actually scares you? Being laughed at or judged? Not trusting yourself to be articulate perhaps? Falling off the stage? (Seriously, that was one of mine!)

Isolate that specific instance that causes you the fear. Then make a strategy to resolve it. Practice your speech until it is second nature to you. Go to the venue and space out the stage. Test your speech on a smaller audience first. Join a toast masters in your area.

Remember, fear is an indicator that you need to prepare or alter something. Once you know what it is you're afraid of, you can make plans to minimize or avoid that outcome. And by being prepared you will have the courage to be brave in any situation.

Of course, being prepared is nothing if you don't take action. In fact, it's kind of the most important part of this process. At some point, you need to start taking steps forward to facing the fear that's been holding you captive for so long.

So, once you have written out a plan, the steps you need to take to eliminate your fear. The next thing is to go to the first step and actually do it.

Now, I know this is probably going to be the scariest thing for you to do but I can assure you with one hundred percent guarantee that as soon as you take that first step, it will become easier to take the next because your courage will grow with each one.

Courage breeds courage. So, as you take each action step forward you will become brave enough to take the next one, and then the next. This is how courage works. Just like that bicep, courage grows each time you use it.

5. Measure your success

Depending on the size of the fear you are facing, it may be gone the first time you go through this process or it may take a few goes.

Sometimes just by recognizing what you are afraid of can be enough to conquer the fear. That's how powerful awareness can be.

Other times it may be something you continually have to work on for your entire lifetime. That's ok. It will have less power over you each time you do this process on it.

Just recently I bought a new mask for snorkeling. It's a full-face mask as I don't like having a lot of equipment around me. As a child, I had a near drowning experience which consequently created a fear of water. I have taken great steps to overcome this fear and can now swim, kite-surf, dive and snorkel.

I was excited to try it out the new mask but it had been raining so the visibility for snorkeling was low. Instead I jumped in the pool. I confidently put on my face mask and put my face down into the water.

Immediately my heart began to race, my breathing was distorted, and the familiar signs of panic began to surface. I calmly (as much as possible) lifted my head up and swam back to the shallow area. It had caught me by surprise.

By using this process, I was able to stop my fear from taking over, calm my heart and breathing down and I proceeded to practice again and again until I was confident again. It was a valuable lesson that sometimes a fear isn't quite finished with you and may need a re-do.

This is why it's important to always evaluate your level of success at the conclusion of the process. Reflection is equally as powerful as acknowledging the fear in the first place and it's important you are as honest with yourself as you possibly can be.

Ask yourself what level of fear from 1 – 10 are you at now. What actions worked and which ones didn't. Acknowledge yourself for what worked, maybe even reward yourself. You don't have to though as the freedom from fear may be enough reward.

If there's still some fear then maybe look at doing the process again but going deeper this time.

Remember, this isn't an opportunity to beat yourself up if you still feel some effect from the fear. This is all about learning and awareness not punishing. If you are wanting to punish yourself then that's just your Fear Monkey® talking.

If that fear no longer has any power over you then it's time to celebrate. You have conquered that fear. How much more courage do you have now when it comes to that fear? How much braver do you feel? What else can you now go and do because that fear is no longer holding you back. How does it feel to be free of that fear?

In the wise words of Aung San Suu Kyi:

*“The only real prison is fear,
and the only real freedom is
freedom from fear.”*

MASTERING YOUR FEAR MONKEY®

Your Fear Monkey® is as smart as you are. This means that sometimes, even with your best intentions, your Fear Monkey® might either take over again or rise its little head again in the future. Here are some bonus tips on managing your Fear Monkey® so that you are its master and not the other way around.

Bonus Tip: Reassure your Fear Monkey®

You have consciously chosen to read this book because you want to create a better life. I know this because a better life is what comes from having the courage to be brave.

Maybe to you that means having more impact, maybe that means more money, maybe that means finding true love, maybe that means skydiving or zip-lining. Whatever it means to you, it's important to be focusing on the same goal as your Fear Monkey® and to reassure it.

A better life is often sought as a key to happiness. Ironically, that's also what Amy the Fear Monkey® wants for you too. But in her case, however, "happy" means not taking risks that could have the potential to make you unhappy. It also means feeling safe and in control.

Sometimes we get focused on the map, seeing only the how-to-get-there part, and forgetting the destination. When fear strikes, remind yourself out loud that your goal is to be happy, healthy and safe.

Speaking out loud is powerful. It lets your Fear Monkey® know without a doubt that you heard its fears, acknowledge the concern, and accept the warnings.

Hearing it said out loud is also a very powerful way to start to reprogram your response system and to exercise your courage muscle. A great thing to say to your Fear Monkey® is, "I hear you, thank you for keeping me safe, I've got this from here."

This reassures your Fear Monkey® that both of you have the same ultimate goal: your happiness and safety. It also reminds it that you are in control and not the other way around.

Bonus Tip: Don't feed your Fear Monkey®

Fear creates depression, anxiety, and more fear. It's an endless loop feeding on itself. If your thoughts are on what *isn't happening*, or on what *falls short*, you're feeding into this loop.

Fear cannot take root in positive thoughts. Expecting the best outcome, being proactive, remembering what you have accomplished up to now. All of these will not allow fear to be overwhelming and instead will enable you to come from a place of courage and confidence.

Facing fear is about reprogramming the oldest and most primitive part of the mind. This takes time. What you do every day, in every waking moment, programs the rest of your mind.

Remember, you are what you think, you are a product of your environment. If you are doing all of these things to reprogram your Fear Monkey® but the rest of your mind is being filled with negative thoughts then your Fear Monkey® is going to feed off of those and you'll never become courageous and brave.

If you are continually telling yourself that you are incapable, you become incapable. If you constantly tell yourself you are afraid, the fear will never leave you. Be aware of what you are feeding your Fear Monkey®.

Replacing fear with positive thoughts will not only reprogram Amy the Fear Monkey®, but it will also reprogram *you*. You become exactly what you think you are. "What you believe, you achieve" as the saying goes, so start believing you are courageous and brave. Feed your monkey that!

There are many ways to face fear, but the surest way to do it is through logic and reason. Reason confounds fear. Analyze, scrutinize and classify your fears.

Acknowledge them, thank them for the warning, make a plan if necessary and then continue.

And please also be easy on yourself. All of this will take considerable practice, but it will work in the end. Even in a short amount of time, if you're consistent, you're going to see positive change in a fairly short time. How exciting is that! And before you know it you'll be braver than you ever imagined.

Bonus Tip: Use fear on your Fear Monkey®

So far you will have acknowledged what you are afraid of, thanked your fear for protecting you, made a plan to minimize any concerns and reassured your Fear Monkey® you both want the same outcome.

But what happens if your Fear Monkey® tries to take over when you are half way through this process (and trust me, that's exactly what might happen). This little trick is a handy one to have in your arsenal.

This little trick puts you as the master of your Fear Monkey® instead of being the puppet with it pulling the strings. Now you get to flip the fear over and use it to your advantage.

Switch the tables, let your Fear Monkey® start working *with* you instead of against you. Use whatever it is you are afraid of, expand it to its full potential and then give it back to your Fear Monkey® to mull over.

For example, if your Fear Monkey® is afraid to take a risk, ask it instead how "happy" will you be when you're in the same job, or in the same place, five years from now because you didn't take that risk?

Let that little part of your brain worry about *not* taking a chance. Let it worry about being too safe. If you're afraid of dating, make that Fear Monkey® focus on what it would be like to be alone for another year. Or worse, another five years.

Use the fear in reverse, on your Fear Monkey®. Scare it into submission, not in a nasty way or it will retaliate, but with certainty because in reality, if it keeps controlling you and keeping you 'safe' you may never even leave the house.

CONCLUSION

In the science fiction classic, *Dune*, Frank Herbert wrote:

Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me.

'Mind-killer' is right. It's also the courage killer. Fear removes logic and reason. Fear overrides our higher thought processes and sets us on the level with the 'lizard-brain,' the most primitive part of our brain.

Fear is what stops us from having the courage to be brave. Having the courage to take risks that could propel our life forward to levels of success, love, and happiness we can't even imagine.

Letting fear control you means restricting your life. Holding back when you want to step forward. Hesitating, procrastinating, self-sabotaging. Fear is what creates all of these behaviours. Everything that stops you from being brave.

Remember Amy the Fear Monkey® wants to keep you safe at any cost. If that means hiding under a rock, then so be it. Only by being able to master your Fear Monkey® by acknowledging your fears and reducing their control are we able to live with courage and confidence.

Let these things "pass over and through" as Herbert penned, that we might reach the other side of fear where it no longer can control us and instead we are in control of it. This is where freedom lives.

Regulate fear to its intended use, as a warning system. Regulate fear to the role of something not to be ignored. Instead see it for what it is; an indication of something you need to deal with – maybe not in the ‘fight or flight’ way but another manner altogether.

Remember, fear does not have to mean the end of everything. Instead, allow fear to be useful, especially when it provides the fuel we need for courage to make that speech, or even the extra burst of speed to catch that bus.

Tapping into fear is a way to harness your energy differently. But first, we need to understand the warning signs, so that we might ultimately free ourselves from its crippling effects. Becoming buried under fear is a weakness but tapping into it is a strength. It is this strength that builds our courage.

Notice the next time you’re afraid. Do you shake? Jump up and down? Do you feel like you need to fly off in many different directions suddenly? That’s the adrenaline pumping. That’s Amy your Fear Monkey® working.

Congratulations, you have just been given a burst of energy to handle the upcoming event, to prepare for what *might* go wrong. Use that to realize that should an issue arrive, you’re prepared to circumvent it, and then use the burst of energy as the courage you need to step forward bravely towards the thing you fear.

Since everything goes through the ‘Amy’ your Fear Monkey®, the more you train it to accept logic and optimism, the more you will be able to reprogram it to be an essential part of your personal growth. And, the fewer things that will stand in the way of you being courageous.

Retraining your brain is possible. Be patient and kind to yourself. Remember that you’ve made it this far and there’s no telling how much further you can go by using your fears instead of them using you.

Do all of this and your future starts looking very exciting. Practice this every time fear shows up. Before you know it, you will have more courage than you ever imagined and be braver than you ever thought you could be.

Now go forth, and be all of you. Pursue those dreams, take that risk, make that speech. You have the courage to be brave.

With love,

Tegan Marshall xo

Extra support

Being courageous is much easier when you don't have to do it alone. If you would like to be part of a club filled with other like-minded brave women who are all practicing facing their fears and being their courageous selves then check out the Facing Fears Club.

www.FacingFears.Club

Member only resources to support you to face your fears

- Inspirational stories from other members
- Access to exclusive content and courses
- Discounts on books, courses and workshops
- Private VIP Facebook group
- Direct access to author Tegan Marshall
- A safe place to learn and grow

More resources

Looking to master even more of your fears? Visit the Facing Fears website for more resources: webinars, books, courses, workshops, and blogs.

www.FacingFears.com.au

More about Tegan

If you would like to read Tegan's personal story of how she overcame her own fears and found the courage to leave the abusive family she was brought up in:

[Facing Fears – Finding courage to reveal the real you](#)