

Action Cures Fear

Ten minutes of action for most tasks is a pretty low expectation. You can do almost anything for ten minutes. If ten minutes is still too much, make it five. Hell, make it one. I don't care. Set whatever expectation is low enough for you to feel capable, then act on it.

Fear is a result of contemplation. The more time you spend thinking about something you need to do, the more likely you are to build up fear around it. Of course, it's wise to look before you leap, but the more time you spend staring over the precipice, the more paralyzed you become.

Part of the magic of setting a timer for ten minutes and getting right into a task is that it doesn't give you time to worry about your ability or performance. Set a timer. Three, two, one...go! You've now moved from thinking to acting. I think there is some relationship between your body acting and your brain saying, "Well, we no longer need to spend energy on the deciding process because now we're in it! Time to switch from worry to problem-solving mode!"

As the quote above says, "Only engage, and then the mind grows heated." We have certain limitations on what our mind and body can do all at once. Tasks in the brain are constantly being prioritized through complex processes apparently developed over millennia of evolutionary trials and errors. There is a sort of "genius, power, and magic" in action. When your brain is preoccupied by the fact that you're actually performing a task, there are fewer resources available to devote toward fear.

I think a lot of the time when we think of fear we immediately go to the mortal danger type of fear. If you want to face that type of thing by jumping out of a perfectly good airplane, go for it. But fear can take many forms and we can express it in many ways.

"Imposter Syndrome"—the nagging question of, "*Who am I* to be doing this thing? I'm not as qualified as someone else!" is certainly a common expression of fear. Of course I have these thoughts from time to time when it comes to my writing. But not while I'm writing. All I'm thinking about when I'm writing is what the next sentence is going to say.

I remember experiencing this cure for fear in drama as well. I loved acting when I was younger. Stage fright was a very real thing. The first time I sang a song in front of an audience I blacked out. I know I sang a duet with my buddy because there's video evidence. But I have no memory of actually singing the song. I was so terrified, I remember feeling sick and shaking as I walked out onto the stage and took the microphone. I remember looking at my friend and seeing sort of a red warm fuzziness. Then, I remember walking back to the choir bleachers and joining the rest of the kids. The performance itself is gone from my brain!

That was definitely the worst of it. From then on, I would get nervous before a performance, but as soon as I spoke the first line, or sang the first note, I became so enveloped in the act that the fear evaporated. I came to completely ignore the stage fright because I knew once I was out there acting, it would leave me anyway. Eventually, I stopped getting nervous before a show at all. Or at least, I experienced it differently. It became a sort of energy that I would direct toward projecting my performance.

I had read about action curing fear in *The Magic Of Thinking Big* by Dr. David J. Schwartz. I had seen it firsthand on the drama stages throughout high school. But for some reason, it took me twenty more years before it really sunk in to my daily experiences. The ten-minute practice didn't give me any room to think about my qualifications for writing a book, or my worthiness of hitting the publish button on my blog. Action pushes fear to the side until you find yourself looking back and wondering what all the fuss was about to begin with.

Action: _____

Daily: _____





