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## Counteracting Fear Flu Build a Healthy Emotional Immune System

How are you dealing with the fear that's going around like a highly contagious virus? Regardless of your situation, it's difficult to avoid exposure to it, so the key is how to counteract and even prevent the negative impact it can have on you. Keep reading for some practical tips and to find out about upcoming group sessions starting in April for those looking for work.

### What's Going On?

Notice what happens when you feel afraid, anxious, or even panicked. Your breath gets shallow, your pulse gets faster, your digestion slows, and your adrenaline levels increase. These are part of the body's preparation for fight or flight. (Actually, other automatic reactions include freeze or faint-- think of an opossum.) You're in survival mode, and these reactions can help you stay alive in emergencies or dangerous situations.

But what do you do when your stress is about handling an ever increasing to do list, being constantly exposed to negative news, coping with financial challenges, and/or trying to find a new job? The fight, flight, freeze, or faint responses aren't so helpful then because they drain your physical energy and block the visioning, creativity, and ability you need to see new possibilities and take positive steps toward what you want.

### What Can You Do?

When a virus invades a body and symptoms like a fever or runny nose develop, many people react by taking medication to push through and keep going. While this approach may work in the short term, it overrides the body's natural response to slow down, rest, and strengthen the immune system, which will keep you healthier and stronger in the long term.

The same goes when you're in a negative situation and the symptoms of anxiety, fear, or panic appear. Some push harder by working longer hours to try to keep up or by tracking job postings online 'til the wee hours of the night. Others become paralyzed, unable to take action. Instead, what if you used these symptoms as clues to slow down and get centered, building your emotional immune system?

Here are some practical steps you can take:

- Practice slow, deep breathing through your nose. Good breathing uses the diaphragm rather than the chest. Breathing through your nose helps calm the nervous system and keeps the proper balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in your system, according to the research of Dr. Konstantin Buteyko. And, imagine how much clearer you can think and act.
- Slow down and notice your contact with the floor, the chair, and your clothes. What's the quality and texture of the contact? What parts of your body can you feel? Then, look around you and notice your surroundings. Is there a speeding car coming at you, or are you safe in this moment? This helps you bring your awareness into the present moment and ground your energy, counteracting the feeling of being out of control and unsafe. If you have a few minutes, go for a short walk outside.
- Consider what makes you afraid, worried, frustrated, depressed, etc. Make a list of all of the stressful thoughts and beliefs going through your mind. Here are some of the common ones I'm hearing lately.
  - From those who are employed- "I can't keep up with all the work," "I'm afraid I'm going to lose my job," and "I hate my job, but I can't leave in this economy."
  - And, from those looking for work- "I'm afraid I'm going to run out of money," "I'm worried I'll never find a job," and "Nobody wants me."

- What are you thinking? Often just writing your worries down reduces your anxiety. Then, set the list aside.
- Give your mind something interesting to focus on that is beyond yourself and your immediate concerns. Ask yourself, "Where can my gifts and talents be most helpful to my community now?" If you're alive today, you are needed, especially now. There is still work to be done and contributions to be made. What I see are people renewing their commitment to make a positive difference in the world and collaborate with others, which is healing medicine for our hearts.
- On a physical level, minimize junk foods filled with empty calories and low nutrition. Instead, make sure you're getting enough vegetables, fruits, and whole grains to fuel your physical body to take action and minimize energy lags and mood swings.
- Just like other viruses, prevention is key. How can you minimize exposure to negative news stories, gossiping, and complaining? What could do instead? I'm starting a garden!

Maintaining a healthy immune system is important. When you reduce the amount of time you spend being under the weather physically or emotionally, you free up energy so you can focus on what you really want to create in your life.

Live well,

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