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When Fear Creeps In

Hello Friends!

How are you? I have been settling in to our new normal, which really is the wide awake awareness that life is constantly changing and shifting. It has been a rollercoaster ride, right? And this, sometimes can feel quite scary.

Fear is so present these days. We may be fearful for our own health or the health of our loved ones. We may be afraid about the economic security of our families, our communities, the world as a whole. We feel uneasy, simply because we have no idea what life will look like in 2 days or 2 weeks let alone 2 months. We may be scared that, with all the changes and uncertainty, we are going to lose something precious.

Fear gets a bum rap but it is not inherently bad. Its part of our biology, a warning sign that is meant to help us survive. Fear is the energy that wakes us up when we need to respond to a possible danger and tells us to pay attention. Fear, when it is in balance, asks us to reach out to our community and then mobilize into action to protect ourselves.

However, fear can be more challenging when we don't know what to do and it leaves us paralyzed. Sometimes we can get stuck in a loop, unable to see past the fear signal. It can create havoc when it carries us so far out ahead into a distant future that we can't even imagine what our next step should be. Fear can freeze us unproductively or send us into a disorganized frantic panic.

What can we do when fear takes hold, when we wake up in the middle of the night unable to shake our fright? How can we settle our hearts? Here are a few small offerings from the wisdom of nature and Chinese medicine that can help us transform our fear to faith.

1. **Slow down.** Take a deep breath. Maybe two or three. Slowing down can help us get clear on what we need to do. Stillness allows us to hear our inner voice which often is steadying and can help us see the way forward.
2. **Take stock of resources.** If fear is beginning to feel like panic, we can reassure ourselves by connecting to all that we have that will help us find our way steadily forward. Our relationships, our past experiences, our unique talents and our own inner

wisdom are all things we can draw upon as well as the kindness of our community, the depth of our faith, and if we have them our finances. When I feel scared in the face of the unknown, I make a list of all the seemingly impossible problems that I was able to solve, the people I know I can count on. It reminds me that I have everything I need to find the way forward, no matter how dark it may get.

3. **Rest.** Whether this means sleeping in, heading to bed early, taking naps, or just allowing yourself to move a little bit slower, giving yourself plenty of rest can give you the clear head you need to find the next small step you can take in this moment.
4. **Feel the earth beneath your feet (and in your hands).** When my mind feels like a racing river, overflowing its banks, I will go outside and put my bare feet on the ground. Or I will lay down and feel the solidity of the earth holding me up. It is the embodied sensation of being supported and it always settles me down, just like the river banks can contain a raging river. For some people digging in the ground and working in the garden has the same effect, settling the heart and helping the fear to shift. There is something about touching the earth--its like building a levy to contain the flood of uneasiness.
5. **Practice having compassion for yourself.** Sometimes, in order to get out of a fear loop, we need to simply acknowledge the feeling and hold ourselves with the same tenderness that we would offer a small child. Meditation teacher [Tara Brach](#) has a [wonderful set of resources](#) to help us navigate the pandemic and for [developing self compassion](#) during a time of fear. Click [here](#) to access them.
6. **Sing.** Humans have long used song to get us through the darkest nights. Song can create a container for our emotions, it can hold us steady and it can connect us to each other. But wait there is more! Singing is a resource we can use to strengthen our immune system! A [study](#) at the University of Frankfurt has shown that singing strengthens our immune system and can help improve our moods. Singing releases endorphins and helps us feel happy and connected, breaking up a stuck fear signal. If you are needing some inspiration [this amazing song](#) by Mavis Staples offering up hope [In Times Like These](#) has been a favorite of mine to belt around the kitchen this week.
7. **Connect to our Faith.** The other side of fear is faith. Sometimes, the truth of the matter is, no matter what we do, no matter what actions we take the sand will shift again and the world will be upside down for a time. That is when connecting to something bigger, whatever that is for you, can carry us home. It may be a prayer you bring to your lips, or a walk through the woods. It may begin by simply being silent asking for help and then listening deeply to what rises in your heart.

Tell me, how are you moving through this time of unknowing? What is helping you when fear creeps in?