

Day 1

When we are in fear, we focus all our attention on the point of danger and lose our capacity to find any courage, sanity, or peace within ourselves. We become so obsessed with what threatens us that the inner strengths of the heart become inaudible. Perhaps this is why, in the Christian New Testament, the phrase "be not afraid" is found so often.

— Wayne Muller in *Legacy of the Heart*

To Practice: Use "be not afraid" as a mantra as you are walking around town.

Day 2

The great builder of dualisms is fear: fear cries out for boundaries, divisions, districts, and absolutes, but love casts out fear.

— Carol Ochs in *Song of the Self*

To Practice: Avoid talking in "us" versus "them" terms.

Day 3

Someone once described FEAR in an acronym: False Expectations Appearing Real.

— John-Roger in *Do It!*

To Practice: Don't let your mind imagine something awful that hasn't happened yet.

Day 4

There is a marvelous story told about a four-year-old child who awoke one night frightened, convinced that in the darkness around her there were all kinds of spooks and monsters. Alone, she ran to her parents' bedroom. Her mother calmed her down and, taking her by the hand, led her back to her own room, where she put on a light and reassured the child with these words: "You needn't be afraid, you are not alone here. God is in the room with you." The child replied: "I know that God is here, but I need someone in this room who has some skin!"

— Ronald Rolheiser in *The Holy Longing*

To Practice: Be present for loved ones who are frightened.

Day 5

Fear builds walls to bar the light.

— Baal Shem Tov

To Practice: Shine the light on your fear and see its true colors.

Is it simply an insecurity, a figment of an overactive imagination, or something else?

Day 6

When the dragon of fear is examined it is found to be a mouse.

— Kenneth Verity in *Awareness Beyond Mind*

To Practice: Don't allow your fears to make you blow everything out of proportion.

Day 7

I was amazed at how much energy I had wasted on fear. Time after time, I found myself fearing I would not be able to do something. Then I would do it . . . Our fears take us to the edge of our being, to a place where we are fully alive.

— Sarah York in *Pilgrim Heart*

To Practice: Use moments of fear as opportunities to test your limits.

Day 8

The original Pali word for a Buddhist monk or Renunciant Bhikkhu means "fear seer" — one who can tolerate his own terror.

— Mark Epstein in *Going on Being*

To Practice: Look closely at what you are afraid of. Try to probe its depths like a wise old seer would.

Day 9

Fear is just another story with which we distract ourselves.

— Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfeld in *Seeking the Heart*

To Practice: Make a conscious effort not to be distracted from what you can do by your fears about what might happen.

Day 10

The poet Jelaluddin Rumi writes of night travelers who search the darkness instead of running from it, a companionship of people willing to know their own fear.

— Pema Chodron in *When Things Fall Apart*

To Practice: Find companions with whom you can talk about your fears.

Day 11

Fear has the largest eyes of all.

— Boris Pasternak in *Hoarfrost*

To Practice: When you feel you are about to succumb to a panic attack, close your eyes and breathe deeply.

Day 12

What is your greatest fear? The Kabbalists say that there are two kinds of fears, external fear and internal fear. External fear is the fear of losing the things we value in the outside world, like honor, wealth, health, or life. Internal fear is the fear of losing a sense of the divine within yourself, of disconnecting from what makes you sacred.

— Shoni Labowitz in *Miraculous Living*

To Practice: Contemplate: what is your greatest fear and what does it reveal about your priorities?

Day 13

The most fearful people in the world are Americans, because they have so much to lose. And never has there been a people with so much who are still afraid of not having enough.

— Richard Rohr in *Job and the Mystery of Suffering*

To Practice: Don't be attached to your things, and you won't be afraid of losing them.

Day 14

Xenophobia, the fear of strangers, is an infection of the soul particularly virulent in our times, but it is not a fear only of foreign people. It's a deeply disturbing anxiety that affects

everything we do. At its root is a fear of "the strange."
— Thomas Moore in *The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life*

To Practice: To combat fear of "the strange" watch a movie about a foreign culture or, better, have dinner with someone from one.

Day 15

The next time you encounter fear, consider yourself lucky. This is where the courage comes in. Usually we think that brave people have no fear. The truth is that they are intimate with fear. When I was first married, my husband said I was one of the bravest people he knew. When I asked him why, he said because I was a complete coward but went ahead and did things anyhow.

— Pema Chodron in *When Things Fall Apart*

To Practice: Recall times when you have gone ahead and done things despite your anxieties.

Day 16

Real fearlessness is the product of our tenderness. It comes from letting the world tickle your raw and beautiful heart.

— Rinpoche Chogyam Trungpa in *No Enemies Within* by Dawna Markova

To Practice: Go through a news magazine and look at the pictures. Pick someone you might normally be afraid of, and try to empathize with his/her situation.

Day 17

Fear is an acid which is pumped into one's atmosphere. It causes mental, moral, and spiritual asphyxiation, and sometimes death — death of energy and all growth.

— Horace Fletcher

To Practice: Do something that energizes you — exercise, go to a concert, laugh.

Day 18

Neither a man nor a crowd nor a nation can be trusted to act humanely or to think sanely under the influence of a great fear.

— Bertrand Russell, British philosopher

To Practice: Encourage your community and national leaders to be restrained in their actions *especially* because these are fearful times.

Day 19

What do you have to fear? Nothing. Whom do you have to fear? No one. Why? Because whoever has joined forces with God obtains three great privileges: omnipotence without power, intoxication without wine, and life without death.

— Saint Francis of Assisi

To Practice: Be grateful for these three privileges.

Day 20

Move outside the tangle of fear-thinking.

Live in silence.

— Jelaluddin Rumi in *The Essential Rumi* by Coleman Barks

To Practice: Relish silence as a divine milieu where you can find the alternative to fear — love.

Day 21

In dealing with fear, the only way out is in.

— Sheldon Kopp in *No Enemies Within* by Dawna Markova

To Practice: Remember, fear is a natural emotion. It best to face it so it doesn't get the best of you. Name it, test it, and replace it with love and compassion for yourself and others.

Taken from: "Spiritual Literacy in Wartime" by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, authors of *Spiritual Literacy* and *Spiritual Rx*. The entire e-course can be accessed on-line at:

www.spiritualityhealth.com

Coping with Fear by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Fear has seeped into our lives like an oil slick. It is covering our land with a sickening unease that is choking off our efforts to surface from our shock and grief following the terrorist attacks of September 11. Every aspect of daily life seems to be polluted by it.

Fear is a very potent emotion. Through its power of suggestion we find ourselves running various scenarios of death and destruction in the theaters of our minds. Fear plays upon natural feelings of vulnerability and turns them into expectations that another terrorist attack could happen at any moment. The concerns first voiced by children on the day of the attacks—Is my house safe? Will something bad happen to me and my loved ones?—are now coming out of the mouths of people of all ages.

Recovery programs say that it takes three weeks—21 days—to break a bad habit or to start a new practice. To help us cope with runaway fears, Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat have created a 21-day program for breaking the fear habit. *Kingdom People*, Good Shepherd's Peace and Justice group, has prepared this handout of the Brussat's program in hopes that our community of faith can use their suggestions throughout the season of Lent. Follow the program day by day, or choose one day's suggestion to reflect on for a week or more at a time. However you use it, we encourage you to focus on giving up fear for Lent and responding to the Gospel call to:

"Be not afraid"