# Error in Thinking: "It's Okay to Shut Off Fear."

We all know that when we do something that is harmful or illegal, there will be consequences. A person who breaks the law knows that he can be arrested and locked up. In a risky or dangerous crime, he is well aware that he can be injured or killed. Yet it is striking to see how often some people ignore these thoughts.

A person planning destructive behavior may shut off fear of what could happen -- like turning off a light switch.

These same people may warn their own children about the risk of destructive behavior, yet ignore their own advice in their own lives. A father teaches his children how wrong it is to steal. Yet, when he runs out of money to buy drugs, he steals everything in his son's piggy bank. He did not intend on hurting his son. But he is so determined to buy the drugs, he simply shuts off any thought of right or wrong — or of the consequences to his family and himself.

Maybe it would be too painful for such people to stop and think; they might have to face the fact that they're hurting others. The problem is that people who act destructively don't stop to think. The excitement of the moment or the intensity of their desire gains the upper hand.

People whose conscience would prevent them from harming an elderly or sick person might break into an elderly person's home; they choose to not think about the consequences.

Only later will they be faced with possible regret about what happened to them as a result of their actions or what they have done to others. That "later" is always too late!

Most of us feel some fear when we think about actually doing a dangerous or destructive act. The thought of what could happen brings that fear. We may shut it off -- drink or use drugs -- or choose to think of other things. But we do feel it. That feeling of fear is like an alarm, warning us that something is wrong. If we take the time to notice the fear -- to think about what could happen -- we are less likely to do something destructive.

Some people think it takes courage to do dangerous and destructive things. The truth is, people who do those things often don't have enough courage to face their own feelings.

Facing your feelings takes a great deal of courage. And learning to listen to your own conscience -- your own fears of what could happen -- is a valuable step toward change.