

Episode Transcript

TAOLC EP: 32 -

Mastering Fear and Turning Anxiety into Growth: The Revolutionary Power of Emotional Intelligence

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Welcome to the Art of Living Consciously podcast, a show designed for out-of-the-box thinkers and mindset shifters who are looking for new ways to evolve. This is an intimate container designed to uplift, inspire and motivate you on your own growth journey. I'm your host, Dannie Reeve. As a certified BNE or Bio-Neuro-Emotion practitioner, I empower men and women to turn their conflicts into stepping stones for growth, because when you question your own beliefs and perceptions and take responsibility for your life, everything else follows. If you ask me, earth is a place where souls are sent to evolve, and in this podcast we will discuss the best tools for our evolution. Hello, hello, my flawsome friends, and welcome to episode 32.

01:03

As we continue to delve into this mini-series on emotions, our honourable guest today is fear. For a lot of us, fear is a dreaded emotion, but what if I were to tell you that fear isn't just something that holds us back. It's a powerful force that, when understood, can push you forward. Just to give you a simple illustration of how this can happen and why fear can actually be fuel and energy for a lot of us, I just want you to picture this YouTube video that I was watching the other day. It was this family and they went to this fun park and the son was afraid of roller coasters and at first he was like no, I really don't want to go on this roller coaster. But then he kind of mustered energy and started to face his fear and he decided to go and just sat down and you could see he was petrified. I want you to picture this little boy - I think he was eight or nine - sitting on this roller coaster. His father on one side, his mum on the other side and he's in the middle, and you could see he was terrified and the roller coaster went off, did its thing. He came back down and his expression had completely changed. This petrified little boy had turned into this energised chatterbox who couldn't stop expressing his joy, and he was just so proud of himself, so elated by what he had done, that the whole day he was riding on a high. I think a roller coaster is a good metaphor for life and the challenges that it throws at us, and that little boy was faced with a choice. He was faced with the choice of either turning around, letting his fear dictate his next steps and maybe wait on the sidelines, or he could choose something different. He could choose to face the fear and experience the unknown, which is what he ultimately decided to do, and that's what energised him. That's what allowed him to grow more confident and to teach his brain that that experience was not a death or life experience and that he could repeat that in the future.

03:39

When was the last time that you said no to riding your own life roller coaster? When was the last time fear stopped you from doing something important, from doing something that, deep down, you really really desired? Really think about it. Perhaps you didn't ask for that pay rise. Perhaps you didn't go and ask that cute girl out. Perhaps you didn't have that difficult conversation that you wanted to have with your spouse? When was the last time you decided to wait on the sidelines? And if you're human and you probably are, if you're listening to this, this is a completely normal problem to have.

04:28

That's why, today, we're going to do a deep dive into fear. Let's talk about what fear is there to do for us on a biological level, when that is no longer conducive to your growth, how it manifests as a coping mechanism, and what you can do to start using fear as your compass for growth and use it ultimately to build resilience and to adapt to a fast-paced, challenging, ever so evolving world. At the end of the episode, I am going to walk you through a simple exercise so you can reframe your fear and start using it as that compass and that guide that will allow you to take different actions and therefore get different results. So I highly encourage you to stick around until the end so you can benefit from the exercise and, without further ado, let's delve in. Okay, so let's start by defining fear and its purpose, because, as you know by now, every single emotion has a purpose and a positive intent.

05:47

But first of all, let's distinguish between two types of fear. First you have situational fear, that's to say your instinctive, protective response in the face of a real threat, something objective that is happening in your physical reality. Just picture, maybe, an extreme case of somebody pointing a gun at you. That would elicit fear, rightly so. But then there's another type of fear that's called psychological fear, or you could call it imagined fear, because it's basically everything that you imagine to happen in the future. It's not rooted in factual evidence, it's rooted in the picture that your mind is drawing or making of a situation and since your brain doesn't distinguish between facts and imagination - to it Everything is real -.

06:51

This kind of fear is the most pervasive kind of fear in our modern societies. Let me give you a quick, tangible example of how this may show up for you. Let's say there's been a special person on your mind for some time, there's a spark there and you're like, oh, I really just want to go and ask them out. Then the psychological fear might kick in and you might think, oh my God, but what if they reject me? What if I become a laughing stock? And all these imagined threats start popping up one by one in your head. Nothing has actually happened yet. A part of you is just projecting the worst possible outcomes onto that situation and onto that person, and that's what you're freaking out about. That's what's paralysing you. There is a deeper, visceral part of you who is trying to protect you from what it deems as dangerous, as life-threatening, because that's what fear is there to do.

07:59

The positive, biological intent of fear is to keep you alive. It's to prompt you to flee or to freeze in the face of real danger. If you and I had no fear, we wouldn't be alive today. You wouldn't be listening to this podcast right now. Fear is an absolutely necessary emotion. Fear is what's driving people to run for their lives and to flee from Beirut right now. And I do want to take a moment to pause and to acknowledge all the people in the world right now who are going through some terribly frightening things. And I also

believe that emotional regulation and knowing how to handle fear, how to overcome it, how to not let it overpower us, whether it be a psychological fear situation or a real fear situation is pivotal for us to grow as individuals, to remain calm and to not feed into a spiral that is just going to get us nowhere.

09:13

And the problem with us humans is that we spend a lot of time in our minds. Think about animals in the jungle, right, think about, let's say, a lion that's just chased after a zebra. The zebra got away and you know it's like panting, but it's out of danger. What do you think the zebra does? It goes back to doing its normal thing eating grass, whatever it does. It's not there dwelling on what a bastard that lion was and what it could have done to him and what happened. It shakes it off and moves on, and that's what allows it to navigate in a world that is really really challenging. If it let fear overpower it, it would simply not be able to move. It couldn't live, basically.

10:10

So fear is good because it allows it to run for its life, but then there has to be a moment when its body goes back into homeostasis or feeling regulated again and where it can actually get on with its life, no matter what the circumstances are, and it's exactly the same for us humans. We need to learn how to get back into homeostasis, how to ground back into our bodies and how to distinguish between real fear and psychological fear, so we can be more grounded and show up in a better way for both our lives and the people around us. I actually believe emotional regulation, emotional awareness, and emotional intelligence are the real revolution. They are the tools that are going to get us to become better as human beings. Understanding your fears, facing your fears, processing your fears helps you to become a more courageous individual, no matter what your life situation is like right now, and courage is freedom.

11:24

Before we continue with the rest of the podcast and delve into psychological fear, which is really the topic of today, I want to open another parenthesis, because I feel that, in the times in which we are living right now. It is important to talk about these things. I cannot repeat this enough. Understanding our emotions, facing our emotions, processing our emotions is an act of revolution. It is such an important pillar for us to evolve as a society because right now we can see the consequences of living in emotionally dysregulated bodies. You only have to look around and witness some of the leaders who are supposed to be leading countries and who are traumatised children running around in dysregulated adult bodies and wreaking havoc on this world. I just cannot stay silent about this. What is happening in Lebanon, in Gaza, in the Middle East is heartbreaking. What is happening in Ukraine is heartbreaking, but it's a consequence of a lack of emotional awareness and these leaders are our mirrors.

12:45

As painful and triggering as it is to accept that, it's also a very empowering fact, because when you look in the mirror, you can actually do something about it. You can ask yourself how can I become more emotionally regulated, how can I face my fears, how can I face my emotions so I can heal and so I can act like an adult, so I can reparent myself to be someone who can show up with a different quality for this world? I am really passionate about this and I believe that emotional awareness, emotional regulation, should be compulsory subjects at school. It should be taught to politicians. It should be one of the

number one things that we focus on today if we want our world to change. Okay, now that I've said this, I just felt really called to do so. I owed it to my heart. I owe it to your heart, and I hope you realise how powerful you are as an individual who is actually willing to look at themselves, to embrace difficult emotions and to do the work to become a better, more aware person. It's a freaking, courageous, revolutionary act. So, now that we've said that, let's go back to the topic of today, which is psychological fear, and look at the ways in which it manifests and what you can do about it, because when you learn to reframe that type of fear, you actually can use it as a compass that can guide you to step into a much more courageous and fulfilling life.

14:34

When it comes to psychological fear and your imagination, you need to understand that your imagination about the future is largely based on experiences you've had in the past. Your mind is an incredible "meaning making" machine. And when anything happens, it draws onto that database of experiences that you've had to assign a new meaning to. Whatever situation is happening right now. And do you know what the surest way is for you to access a past memory? It's emotions. You access memories through the way they made you feel. In fact, this is a technique that we use as BNE practitioners. We get people to describe a particular situation very vividly and then we'll get them to pay attention to their bodies, and when they are really in the emotion and really connected with that physical sensation in their bodies and they allow themselves to be transported back in the past, they will immediately connect to other specific moments in their lives where they felt that exact same sensation. And all those specific memories are related to each other in one way or another. The common thread here is how those situations made you feel.

16:03

So think about what came to your mind at the beginning of the episode when I asked you for the last time that you let fear stop you in your tracks. Now I want you to consider that you didn't allow yourself to do that thing because a part of you was running away from an uncomfortable feeling. The fear is not about what might happen if you do that particular thing, but how it might make you feel, and that is rooted in past experiences. So, if we go back to the example of somebody who is afraid of asking someone out, that person could be running away from a feeling of being rejected, a feeling of not being good enough, a feeling of being publicly humiliated. So the logical and often not so logical conclusion is well, if I don't do that thing, then I won't feel that feeling, and that's when that part of you drives you to resort to a coping mechanism in order to run away from your uncomfortable feelings, and that could be procrastination, avoidance, distraction, freeze, numbness, overwhelm and anxiety. Think about that example that came to your mind at the beginning of the podcast. What did you do in order to talk yourself out of doing that thing that was important for you? So you see how, while protective in nature, these behaviours are preventing you from facing uncomfortable emotions and feelings linked to past pain.

17:57

If you experienced a lot of rejection in your childhood, you might bring that into your present and project that onto your dating life. Someone who has grown up with a more secure attachment will have a very different experience. They will have a very different set of beliefs associated with a very different set of feelings, and will have less difficulty initiating a conversation with a stranger, for example. However, the past is the past and the present is the present, and you now have the power to choose to act differently,

because the irony is, when you resort to a coping mechanism, the feeling doesn't go away. You remain with that same feeling of helplessness.

18:46

There's this famous study that you've probably heard of, where they interviewed people at the end of their lives, and what came out of this study is that people didn't regret what they did, but usually regretted what they didn't do. They regretted things like not asking that person out or not following their intuition, or not taking a chance and quitting that job they were miserable in, you name it. They regretted not taking a chance on themselves and not confronting their fears, and I actually believe that the things that you most fear are pointing you towards your deepest desires. No, what is best for you is not always what feels best. Sometimes, what's best for you feels dreadful. It feels freaking horrible, because you could be going against years and years of conditioning, where you learned a story about yourself that wasn't true, and now that is keeping you from listening to your internal compass, which actually fear is pointing you towards. Let me share a personal story to show you that these fears can be deeply rooted and that facing them can actually be the medicine that you need.

20:12

For as long as I remember, I've always loved talking. I'm somebody who loves chatting to people. As a little child I used to talk to people in restaurants randomly. I just love expressing myself and I can do that naturally. The other day I was having dinner with a friend and she gave me this huge compliment. She said wow, you are so eloquent. Every time I speak with you. You don't have any filler words, you really articulate your ideas well. And I realised, I'm like, yeah, that is so true. I never would have thought that about myself. But when I look back I'm like, yes, that's true. When I talk with friends, when there's no pressure, when I'm not being recorded, when I'm just being myself, then I can be really eloquent.

20:57

But whenever I'm being recorded, I am absolutely petrified. I lose all my means. When I'm recorded and when I'm filmed and when I record this podcast, I have a lot of difficulty. I am actually letting you in on this. I have to take numerous takes sometimes. I have to stop. It's getting better and better as I face my fear. But this is really what is happening.

21:26

And I first realised that when I was doing a master's in conference interpreting, where the same thing happened Every time someone was listening in to me interpreting. I would be so petrified, I didn't know what to say, I would lose my complete means, like it was dread. And don't get me wrong, I speak English and Spanish fluently, so even my teacher was like you should have no problem translating and interpreting. But something was just very visceral in me. It was just panic that came upon me, so much so that I absolutely bombed the exam. Like I had a panel of people from the European Commission come to this exam that's what we had and they were listening in on our conference interpreting. One of the people from the panel asked my professor if I spoke French. I grew up in France, so I can assure you that I speak French and at the time I just thought right, I just don't like this. I don't know why I bombed the exam. This is not for me, and this is actually when I started going into BNE, because it helped me a lot during those times.

22:48

But now, looking back, I'm like that is so excessive. That dread, that fear was too much. It was something out of this world. And I experience that when I'm recording and I haven't recorded in front of a camera because I know that this will be too much for me at this point in time, and I want to ease myself into it all. And the reason I'm saying that to you is that it's not that I don't enjoy expressing myself and talking about all these things. In fact, I love podcasting, I love recording all this stuff, but there's this fear of getting it wrong. There's still this really visceral fear there when I'm being listened to or recorded. And I haven't gotten to the bottom of it.

23:33

But what I know is that this has gotten me to see this podcasting project as a means to express myself authentically, because I feel that is what a part of me is fearing. It's fearing me saying what I really think, expressing myself, because there are past experiences of my own, but also of my ancestors, where doing so had dire consequences. The thing is, I know that this is my medicine. I know that every time I record a podcast episode, I go through this whole same thing, where I want to procrastinate, so much so that I have to use all the tools that I have learned thanks to Nicole Brennan's coaching program. I must give her a shout out because that was really life-changing for me to really be able to learn tools to regulate my nervous system. That is really working. And I also have to decide and choose to face that very uncomfortable fear and to listen to my intuition.

24:54

So I hope this story helps to get you to think about what in your life are you really afraid of? And is it a rational fear? And that thing that you're afraid of is it really something that your soul desires you to do? And while you think about that, I want you to picture that little boy when he got off the roller coaster. I want you to see the joy on his face, the absolute elation he was feeling, how energised he felt and how proud of himself he was. That could be you one day, once you have faced your fears.

25:35

So now that we've seen how psychological fear can keep you stuck in helplessness, I want to talk about how you get to choose power over feeding into your coping mechanisms. I want you to picture fear like a fork in the road, one path you know, it's familiar, it's safe, but actually it takes you nowhere. The other path is unknown and, yes, it's scary, but it could lead you to more fulfilment, to growth, to learning a valuable lesson, to joy. Which path do you want to choose? Think about it. There's this quote that I heard recently that I really love, and it says easy choices, hard life, hard choices, easy life. So what I'm saying is that fear can drive you towards your coping mechanisms, avoidance, distraction, etc. Or towards your power and your transformation. Ultimately, next time you find yourself at that fork in the road, I'd like you to consider the following prompt: what if you viewed your fear as a compass pointing you towards your next step? What if that very thing that you feared was what was going to get you a lot further in life? Your fear of rejection could actually be what gets you to find the partner of your dreams. Does that mean that it will be easy? Probably not. You'll probably have to go through rejection and you'll probably have to teach your brain that rejection is not going to make you die. You'll probably learn to be stronger from it and you'll become desensitised to it, and that's what will lead you to ultimately meeting the person of your dreams.

27:37

I'm a big fan of Dr Joe Dispenza. I really love his work and his work is making such a huge impact on so many people. But let me remind you that Dr Joe Dispenza was not always taken seriously by the scientific community. In fact, he himself said that he was afraid of them not taking him seriously. So he used to write his books and everything he did with that in mind, trying to cater to the scientific community. And one day in one of his workshops, he was incredibly moved by the story of one of his followers who had healed themselves of I can't remember what condition, but it was a very complicated condition and he was like F this I don't have to cater to the scientific community. I believe in this. This is what my gut is telling me and I'm going to go all in. And that's when he wrote *Becoming Supernatural* and that's when his work started to really take off, fast forward all the way to date, and hospitals want to work with him. He has some of the top scientists doing research on his work and collaborating with him. They came to him because they saw the results.

29:00

Imagine if he had let his fear of being rejected, disliked, whatnot - I don't know what his underlying fear was - get the better of him. Imagine what we would all have missed out on. Now I want you to take this to your own life. What is it that you're not allowing yourself to do right now? Because you are imagining the worst case scenarios. Your brain is making you afraid. Now, the idea is not to get completely rid of fear, as you might have guessed, I'm sorry to say, but fear is going to accompany you your whole life, especially when you are at a fork and just about to do something that you really, really want to do and that is somewhat scary to your brain. But now you know that in those situations, fear is your best friend and you can use it as a compass rather than as a way to stay stuck.

30:02

Now, I'm not saying it's easy. That's not the easy path, and part of that path is learning to sit with those uncomfortable emotions. There are many embodiment and emotional regulation techniques that can help you with that. I actually shared some really helpful tools in episode 24. It's called *Unlocking Body Wisdom: Three Simple Embodiment Practices to Manage Overwhelm*. So you can refer back to that if you would like. I'll also link it in the show notes.

30:32

And the other part of that path is just making a bold decision. It's choosing freedom and courage over comfort and helplessness. It's seeing fear, stress and anxiety as an ally, as something that is propulsing you forward. And there is a really good TED talk by Dr Kelly McGonigal where she shows a series of studies that were done to prove that people who saw stress as beneficial did not suffer negative consequences in their bodies. That's to say that their bodies actually reacted as if they were excited and their hearts didn't constrict as they would if they had seen stress as something negative. Right? So these are great studies that show how reframing stress and fear can impact your biology as well, and I encourage you to watch the TED Talk. I'll also put it in the show notes.

31:39

The truth is that we live in an ever-evolving world. Things are going faster and faster as the years go by, as the years go by, and we are probably going to be faced with a lot of challenges where it's going to be important for us to be emotionally resilient. Building emotional resilience starts with reframing the way that you see fear and stress and a crisis, if you start to see them as a catalyst for growth, as something that will push you to adapt and to grow. You will also see how fearful situations can reveal your inner strengths, but for that you have to rise to the occasion. I recently attended a workshop by Nicole Brennan on fear, which I will also link in the show notes.

32:33

I think there are so many resources out there and this is such an important topic, so if you are willing and wanting to delve deeper, I am going to put those resources down below so you can do that for yourselves. She talked about what it meant to be antifragile right and how it's important nowadays to cultivate that anti-fragility. So fragile someone who is fragile is someone who is damaged by disorder. Resilient is someone that is unaffected by disorder, and antifragile is somebody that benefits from disorder. So the idea is that the more that you face your fears, the more that you become antifragile. Stoics were renowned for having that mindset, and actually I love the definition that Tim Ferriss gives in one of his TED Talks. He says that stoicism is an operating system for thriving in high stress environments, and that's why I want to leave you with an exercise that will help you to do that. Reframe for yourself and start seeing ways in which you can use that fear as a compass for growth. The exercise I'm about to share is a reflective exercise, so probably you want to journal about it, but right now, if you want, you can just listen along and think about whatever ideas come to you and if you want, you can come back to the episode, write down the questions and journal about them later on. Whatever is better for you.

34:15

First, I want you to identify one specific fear. Think about something that you've been afraid of doing, something that you've been putting off. What fear has been holding you back recently? And maybe it's related to what came up at the beginning of the episode. Perhaps you're afraid of starting a project. Maybe you are afraid of saying something to somebody. Maybe you're afraid of setting some limits, some boundaries, whatever comes up for you.

34:44

Now that we've identified the fear, go ahead and think of the worst case scenario. What could happen if you did that thing? What's the worst thing that could happen? Think about one to three possible outcomes and write them down. Let's use the example of someone asking somebody else out. A possible outcome could be that that person says no, they reject you. Another outcome could be that you fumble and you make a complete idiot out of yourself. Another outcome is that that person laughs at you and never wants to speak to you again. Okay, now that you have your worst case scenarios, you're going to think about ways that you can prevent that. In other words, what's a small action that you can take to reduce the chance of the worst happening. In our example, maybe what you can do is rehearse with a friend, ask them to do a role play, because maybe you get really nervous when you speak, and that could alleviate that right, and do that for each possible outcome.

35:55

Now the next step is thinking about how you could recover if things went wrong. If the worst happens. How could you recover? Who could help you? For example, if they do say no, you might reach out to a friend. You might decide to read up about rejection and start taking it as an opportunity to desensitise yourself from rejection.

36:20

Now, what are the benefits of facing fear? That's the juicy part, right. What might you gain if you succeed? Or even if you try, write down one or two potential positive outcomes, for example. In that case, you might gain a really exciting date and be really thrilled and relieved for expressing your feelings. In that case, even if you did try and they didn't say yes, you would gain awareness, you would know and wouldn't be doubting anymore and you could now place your energy on something else, someone else, and move on with your romantic life. You could gain confidence and courage for having expressed your feelings.

37:02

Now, the last part is probably the most important part of this exercise, and even if you skipped all the other questions and just did that question, you'd probably gain a lot out of it. What would it cost you if you didn't take action? Think of it emotionally, physically or even financially over the next six months to three years, depending on what your fear is right, and really think about this one, because that's the one that's often overlooked and is so important. In this case, imagine if you didn't take action. What could be the cost of that? Maybe you would never know if this person liked you or not, maybe the cost of inaction would even be down the road, a family, a life with this person, your health.

38:01

I encourage you to think really deeply about this because it will really get you to reframe things in a positive way for you. This exercise will really help you to look at your fear from a different perspective and then decide whether to move forward with what you want to do or not. And if you do decide to move forward, my question to you is: what's one small step that you can take today to move through this fear? Because obviously, awareness is everything, but action is key. If you're interested, you can find a more detailed version of that exercise in one of Tim Ferriss's talks. It's a TED talk that I'll also link in the show notes below.

38:44

And if there's one thing I want you to take away from this podcast episode is that fear will always be with you, but the choice to let it fuel your growth or hold you back is yours. And remember the things that you most fear also have the power to transform you. And there you have it for today's episode. To find out more about what I do and how I can best serve you, head over to www.danniereeve.com Meanwhile, why not hit that subscribe button so you can be notified when the latest episode drops in? I promise the journey will be worth it. Thank you so much for listening. I truly appreciate you and I wish you a flawsome day that is flawed and awesome just the way we like it.

