

CAREER

REINVENTION

BOOTCAMP

Module 4:
How to Get Past
Your Fears

Audio + Transcript

Pamela: Now we're going to move on to Module 4, which is where we're talking about your career reinvention fears. This is important because the thing to know about career reinvention is that fear is going to be your companion throughout the process. This is something a lot of people don't want to hear. They say, "I need to get over my fear because it's blocking me."

What I want to say to you right up front is that you're not going to be able to "get rid of" your fear because fear is a biological response that we're hardwired as humans to feel. It's a feeling that has a reason.

There's a reason we're wired to feel fear. It's to keep us safe. That comes from back in the caveman times when we were faced with a saber-toothed tiger. The fear response kicked in, the adrenaline got going, and we were feeling anxious and running. That's what assured the survival of the species.

Even today, you're going to naturally feel fear. If you step off the curb in front of an oncoming car, you're going to feel fear. Fear in and of itself is a feeling that has use.

You don't want to get rid of it because it keeps you safe, but where it starts to create issues is because that same physical response can also happen when we are not in danger. It can happen in situations where we're just pushing ourselves outside our comfort zone. That's where we start to have a problem that can derail us in our career reinvention.

It's important to understand that you're not going to get rid of fear because it's there to stay. We're humans. The goal in career reinvention is to learn how to manage your fear and partner with your fear rather than trying to master it and beat it into submission. It takes too much energy, frankly, to try to do that.

You're going to learn to work with your fear because it's a constant companion, but it's a great tool because it helps you identify the areas in which you need to move forward.

Let's talk about the two different kinds of fears. I also talk about this in my book, so it's a little bit of a recap from *The 10 Laws of Career Reinvention*.

There are two types of fears. One is functional fear. Those are the fears that keep us out of danger and create healthy boundaries. When stepping in front of an oncoming car, we're feeling fear. That's a functional fear. We're in infinite danger. We need to change something to make sure we're not putting ourselves in peril.

Opposite to functional fears are false fears. Those are the ones that keep us from pursuing something good. A false fear is, for example, when you're going in for an interview. You're feeling that same kind of anxiety, adrenaline and heart pumping, but that's in the face of something good that you want to be doing. You're not in imminent danger, but your body is reacting like it's in imminent danger.

You want to begin to distinguish between functional fears and false fears. That is the tool that helps you manage your fears in the career reinvention realm.

What is a functional fear, and what is a false fear? Functional fears are ones where you're in imminent danger of something happening. It's a situation that exists today that requires you to take action in the moment to forestall a negative outcome. If you're stepping off a curb, you'd better take action immediately to forestall a negative outcome.

A false fear is when your mind goes to potential negative outcomes that may or may not happen in the distant future.

Many of those fears you're experiencing can be put into perspective simply by asking yourself whether or not you're in danger in this actual moment or whether what you're afraid of happening is happening right now.

One of the examples I love to give from the book is going back to the interviewing example. The functional fear is, "They're reporting heavy traffic today, so I'd better start out early for my interview. I don't want to be late." A false fear is, "What if I'm late for my interview next week?"

This is how you distinguish between whether you need to take action or just manage your fear. If it's not a functional fear where you absolutely have to take action, but it's a false fear, it's not that you won't feel it, but you need to take action in spite of feeling that false fear. It's not about not having the feeling. It's about not allowing the feeling to stop you from taking the action.

There are a number of tactics you can use to manage your fears. You can talk to people, share and support. There are friends, therapists or coaches who have been through what you are facing or can act as a sounding board for you.

You can walk down memory lane, survey your past and make a list of the times you've succeeded despite having your fears. This is a great way to tap in to your power and remind

yourself, “I’ve experienced fear before, and I’ve managed to create despite this. I can do that once again.”

The next thing you can do is look for role models. Often there are others who have overcome the very same thing that you fear. Those people can provide both inspiration and tactical information about how to move past that thing you’re fearing in that movement.

Another thing is to ask yourself this core question. It helps you get perspective. “What’s the worst that could happen? If that happened, could I overcome it?”

Back to that false fear, what’s the worst that could happen if you’re late to your interview next week? Is it the end of the world? No. Could you overcome it? Yes. You could pick up the phone, call and say, “I’m running late.” There are ways to manage and continue to take action.

Fear is great because it provides us opportunities in our career reinvention. It provides us the opportunity to identify areas of growth, where we need to push our boundaries and go beyond our comfort zones. The life we want to live is just outside our comfort zone.

If you have anything you take away from this particular module, it’s that the life you want and vision you have is going to require you to step outside your comfort zone. When you step outside your comfort zone, you will experience fear, but you want to keep stepping. You don’t want to run back to the comfort zone because you won’t create that vision.

Once you know this is a natural part of the process and you feel that fear, you know it’s a signal that you’re moving toward having what you want. You’re expanding your zone of comfort to include that vision that you have.

There will be a while where it’s uncomfortable, but once your zone expands, then that life you’re envisioning is squarely inside your comfort zone. That’s when it becomes a reality. Those are the things fear really does for you.

There are two habits that are going to liberate you from all of this. Often there’s a lot of struggle around fear. These are two ways that fear show up, and I talk about these in the book. Giving up these habits is going to really liberate you from this struggle you might be having around how your fears are popping up.

One is to give up excuses. Law 3 is that progress begins when you stop making excuses. Excuses are a manifestation of fear. When you start saying, “I would do this, but,” and it’s a litany of excuses, know that you’re feeling fear.

If you want to stop struggling in your reinvention, stop making excuses. Once you stop making excuses, your mind can move toward the solution. You can put that energy toward solving problems instead of saying that you’re having this problem and here’s why.

The other habit you want to give up is complaining about a situation. Complaining is basically making excuses in angry mode. “I don’t like this, this and this.” You have the power to make a shift. Complaining about situations many times is because we’re afraid to take a step or make a shift.

Know that if you find yourself complaining about something or making excuses, both of these are manifestations of fear. These habits keep you struggling in your reinvention. They are what cause pain and cause you to be stuck. Know that these are ways your fears show up.

Pay attention to what you’re complaining about. If you’re complaining about it, what are you really afraid of? What change do you need to make that you’re afraid of making?

A great example is that sometimes we’re complaining about a job we have. We don’t really like our boss. Our boss has cut our commission plan, and we don’t like it because we’ve been there for a number of years. Now the revenue is not coming in, so our commissions are going to be cut.

In reality, it’s time for us to find a new job. That’s really where our energy needs to go. That’s where the situation is showing us that we need to make a change in our job, but we’re afraid to go out to make that shift and look for a job. What do we do instead? We complain. “My commission is getting cut, and I’ve been here 10 years.”

If you start complaining about something, it’s really because you’re afraid of taking an action that you need to take. If you’re making excuses like, “I’m old,” it’s fear.

Giving those up and seeing what’s underneath them will be a beacon toward unraveling what you need to solve in order to move forward and have the dream that you want for your career.