



LESSON EIGHT

Fear Defined

It's common for individuals to have very different reactions to similar circumstances. An exciting challenge for one person may be a very stressful event for another. For example, the idea of skydiving sounds like an exciting opportunity to some people, while it sounds terrifying to others.

Fear is an intense emotion that's experienced in the presence of a real or perceived threat. It is a natural survival response that prepares us to face danger. But our bodies can't distinguish an emotional experience of feeling threatened from an imminent physical danger, so when we are fearful we have a physical response. This physical response to fear can hamper our higher thinking abilities, making it difficult to think clearly. It's important that we are aware when we are feeling fear so we can make good decisions about how to proceed.

Use your Post-It Notes to write down your concerns, and write the question number along with the answer. Use a separate Post-It Note for each item.

Case Study

We've just received a memo that will affect everyone in this room: Our company will be part of an acquisition and merger. We will have a tremendous amount of added responsibility during the transition and it will require overtime from almost everyone. We're going to have to find ways of speeding things up. Our team can handle this challenge because we have the knowledge, experience, and skill to work out an effective solution. Together, we need to come up with a creative plan to tackle this added responsibility within two weeks.

Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions:

1. As a member of this team, how are you feeling about this? (Use separate Post-It Notes marked #1 to write your answers.)
2. If you were the manager of this team, how would you feel about this? (Use a Post-It Note marked #2 to write your answer.)
3. What are the challenges to keeping the focus on a team vision so everyone is motivated? (Use separate Post-It Notes marked #3 to write your answers.)

Discuss your answers with the group.

Case Study

Since my husband lost his job last year, I've been the only one bringing income into the family. We have teenage kids about to start college and also have aging parents nearby who rely on us. My income used to be the family's supplemental income, but now we barely get by on it. I go to work everyday knowing that if I lose my job, our personal lives will be in real turmoil. I take on more work than I should, just so I will be valued enough to avoid a layoff. But if I have a great idea or think something should be challenged, I usually play it safe and just hope someone else will fight the battles. I'm so fearful and cautious about every little thing I say or do at work that I feel stressed all the time.

Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions:

Remember to keep the conversation focused on the emotion and how it is affecting her.

How is fear impacting her performance at work?

How is fear impacting her relationships with co-workers?

Discuss your answers with the group.

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Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions:

If you were the person in this situation, how would you use what you know about the five dimensions of EQ to be successful?

The 5-Step STARR Process:

- S – Stop
- T – Think
- A – Assess
- R – Respond
- R – Review

How would you use the STARR process?

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What would you do if this person was your co-worker?

Discuss your answers with the group.

We've learned that it's a good idea to anticipate situations that we may react to with fear. By thinking ahead about what could happen, we can plan a response that is most effective for getting the outcome we want.

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On your own, answer these questions:

How could understanding the impact of fear in the workplace motivate you to respond more effectively?

What, if any, situations can you anticipate that may be negative triggers for fear at work?

When you feel your “glass” turn from clear to cloudy, what will you do?

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How will doing this impact your professional life?

How will doing this impact your personal life?

How will doing this impact your relationships?

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