

Confronting Fear

..... story by Pema Chodron (written and adapted by Amy Fox)

There was once a young warrior whose teacher told her that she had to battle with Fear. The young warrior didn't want to battle Fear. Fear was too aggressive, too powerful, too strong. But her teacher insisted that the day would come and she gave the young warrior instructions for the fateful day.

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And the day arrived, as the teacher said it would. The young warrior stood on one side and Fear on the other. The young warrior felt small and scared as they both drew their weapons.

Remembering her teacher's instructions, the young warrior roused herself and calmly walked toward fear.

Bowing before him she asked, "May I have permission to go into battle with you?"

Fear was taken back and it took him a moment before he said, "Yes, of course you may battle with me. You show great respect for me by asking permission young warrior."

Standing tall the young warrior looked Fear straight in the eyes and asked, "How is it that I may defeat you?"

Again, Fear was taken back by this question but he was disarmed and bound by the spiritual contact of battle that was enacted when the young warrior asked him permission to go to battle. And so, even though he was unwilling to answer, he knew he must.

Fear made himself big and menacing. Encircling the young warrior he said, "My weapons are that I talk fast and I get into your head. Once I'm in your head, you'll become unnerved and you'll do whatever I say. And the more you do what I say, the more my power grows."

The young warrior was calm even as Fear circled around her.

“But what if I don’t do what you say?” she gently asked.

Fear stopped circling and appeared in front of the girl quite small, very unlike the menacing force he once was.

“If you don’t do what I say, I have no power. You can listen to me, you can even respect me or be convinced by me...but if you don’t act upon my words, I have no power.”

With that, the young warrior walked away for she had learned to defeat fear.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

At some point in our lives, we'll confront fear.

Fear of not having something.

Fear of losing something we have.

Fear of something that hasn't happened yet.

As you settle into this place, notice if there are any fears present for you...

DURING CLASS

The key to disarming our fear is to confront it—to name it, acknowledge it and see it for what it really is.

Most of our fears are irrational and if we don't act on our worries and what-if's, we'll discover that the fear itself doesn't hold any power over us.

CLOSING CLASS

Overcoming our fears is one of the most difficult challenges we face in life, but if we're willing to lean into our fear and see it for what it really is – if we're able to acknowledge that fear is just a feeling and not a reality – we allow ourselves to become a warrior in our lives.

EXTRAS

An Exercise in Releasing Fear's Grip

You can use the exercise below during class, interjecting it during intense moments or peak poses; or, you can offer this as a post-class exercise for your students.

Step 1: Name Your Fear

The first step in releasing our fear is naming it as identifying our fear allows us to see our fear as something we're holding onto rather than something that is part of our self. Ask: "What's my fear?"

Step 2: Disarm Your Fear

Lean into the fear. What is it telling you? What are you so afraid of? Actually listening to your fear lessens the physiological impacts that you feel.

Step 3: Minimize Your Fear

Take action. Let your fear guide you on this one. What's fear telling you not to do? What would happen if you did that thing or another bold action? What's really the worst that could happen? As long as it's not a life-threatening decision, take the risk and you'll find the more you face down your fear, the more control you have.