

Fear Deserves a Hearing

Suppressing fear is the first thing we ever resist. It is also the first place we get to soften.

I have watched people work on themselves for decades now, and I want to say something plainly, because I think it saves people a lot of unnecessary shame. **Fear does not go away.** Not when you meditate every morning. Not when you have done the practice for thirty years. When you meet people who are realized, when you meet people who have gone very deep for a very long time, they still feel fear. So if you are waiting for the day when fear stops arriving, you are waiting for a day that does not come, and in the meantime you are treating a completely normal part of your being as evidence that you are failing.

That is the first thing I want to take off the table. The second is harder.

Most of us do not actually deal with fear. We manage it. We get busy, we get productive, we get analytical, we make a plan, we tell ourselves the reasonable version of the story. All of that looks like maturity from the outside. Underneath it, something is being pressed down. And pressing it down is not neutral. It costs energy, all day, every day, to hold something under the surface.

Here is what I said about it on a call this week:

“That’s a part of your being that deserves to be respected, that deserves to be listened to. Suppressing it creates an inner struggle. To me, that’s the original form of resistance and the original place to surrender.”

TIM O. DAVIS — GROUP TEACHING CALL, AUGUST 2026

I want to slow that down, because there are two claims in it and both matter.

The first is that fear **deserves to be listened to.** Not obeyed. Listened to. Fear is a part of you. It is often the youngest part of you, the part that learned early on what was dangerous and has been standing watch ever since. When you shove it in a closet, you are not being spiritual. You are doing to yourself the exact thing that made it afraid in the first place: you are telling a frightened part of you that it is unwelcome and it should be quiet.

The second claim is the one I care about most. **Suppressing it creates an inner struggle.** That struggle is the original resistance. Long before we resist a person, a diagnosis, a conversation we do not want to have, we are already resisting

a feeling that has come up inside us. Everything else is downstream of that.

So what is the alternative? Not to indulge it. Fear indulged is just anxiety with a bigger microphone. The alternative is to soften around it. To let the tightening in the chest be there, to let the racing mind be there, and to not go to war with either one.

Practically, that means noticing the moment the body clenches, and then, instead of tightening further, doing the unnatural thing: relaxing your shoulders, letting the breath get regular again, and staying. You are not trying to make the fear leave. You are trying to be present with it without handing it the keys.

And notice what happens to the mind when you do. Fear’s whole strategy is to grab your attention and convince you that something out there has to change immediately. It brings up the oldest stories you have. It shows you the worst possible translation of the events. That flood of catastrophe is not information. **It is a signal that it is time to relax,** because the worst case almost never plays out, and the version of you that is producing those images is not the version of you that solves anything.

There is a real difference between being afraid and being run by fear. You can be genuinely scared and still be stable in yourself. You can feel the whole thing move through you and still know who is doing the feeling. That is not fearlessness. That is something better, because it is available to ordinary people on ordinary Tuesdays.

Am I coming from fear or from love? I ask that question a lot, and I want to be clear it is not an accusation. Fear is not disqualifying. It is just worth knowing which one is holding the pen when you write the email, make the decision, walk into the room. Most of the damage I have done in my life was done by fear I had not admitted was there, moving through me dressed as certainty.

So let it be there. Give it a chair. Listen to what it is protecting, which is usually something tender and real. And then decide, from a settled place, what you actually want to do.

THE PRACTICE

The next time fear arrives, do not argue with it and do not obey it. Let the shoulders drop, let the breath even out, and let the fear be in the room with you. Then ask what it is trying to protect.