

February 09

## **FEAR**

Fear seems all around us these days. We often hear the phrase "flight or fight" as a description of the human fear response. For me, there should be a third word, "freeze", the proverbial "deer in the headlight", no ability to move toward or away.

Many of us may or may not feel any direct, immediate threat or danger beyond the normal hazards of living; however, we are surely not immune to the anxiety currently felt all over the world about the economy, job losses, homes lost, the endless wars and the suffering poverty entails.

This morning, in fact, this generalized state of mind resulted in spending some of my morning avoiding doing needed tasks, such as this newsletter, which only intensified my anxiety.

Observing myself in this state, I noticed that I was tightening my neck and clenching my jaw, freezing parts of my body. The act of observing made a difference. It brought me back to the present and diminished my fear. By noticing what was going on in my body, I generated new choices. I began by letting go of the tension in my jaw and my neck. Spontaneously, I took a deep breath. My body began to expand and feel lively. The words for this piece began flowing more easily. Tasks that seemed insurmountable a few minutes ago now seem quite doable.

Fear and anxiety are ancient and natural components of living. Most of us cannot escape them, but we can learn how to cope with and manage them more effectively. It is always helpful to be able to first stop the physical habitual reaction to stimulus... tightening the neck, pulling the head down into our necks. Then we have more choices about how we respond. We can also respond more rationally and more productively.

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