

INSIGHTS:

A COACHING NEWSLETTER BY PULLEN ASSOCIATES



What are you not doing because you are afraid?

One of my clients is frustrated with a co-worker. John is afraid to say anything about his feelings to this new partner for fear of damaging their working relationship. Day after day, John goes to work. He puts on his best game face, and does his own job as well as some of his partner's work. Then he goes home and complains about the situation.

Joan is a 35-year-old hairdresser who has always wanted a salon. She does not have her own business because she is afraid to take the leap. She thinks every day about having her own place, but the thought of taking that first step toward her dream fills her with paralyzing fear.

Scott wants to move up in his career. He knows he has what it takes to be successful, but he is afraid of speaking in front of groups of people. The next job on his career ladder involves frequent public speaking. He is stuck.

It happens to all of us. We see where we want to go. We know what we want to accomplish. We hesitate because we are afraid. We step out of leadership in our own lives.

I see clients act in big ways and in small ways to sabotage their own efforts to make changes. They fear failure, or conflict, or loss of face. They make up excuses. They vow to do things differently the next time. Like too many people, though, they find themselves acting the same old way and making the same old excuses the next time similar situations arise. This behavior is costly.

John is afraid to cause conflict with his frustrating co-worker, so in order to keep the peace he avoids initiating a potentially beneficial conversation. He pays the price for surrendering to his fear in limited effectiveness on the job and in reduced fulfillment in his career. Each time Joan steps away from her dream of having her own salon, she feels worse about herself. She resigns herself to the idea that things always will be the way they are. She never will own that salon. Scott pays the price of allowing his fear of public speaking to dominate his decisions in lost opportunity for advancement. He will not step up to the next rung on his career ladder.

We do have a choice to make when we are afraid. Fear is a normal response to the prospect of stepping out of our comfort zones and taking on new challenges. I have yet to meet a client who is not afraid to take action toward changes he or she wants to make. Whether leading a corporate re-organization, opening a difficult conversation or learning a new task, people who lead in their own lives pay attention when they feel afraid. Leaders choose to act positively rather than to allow fear to paralyze them. They acknowledge fear; they do all they can within reason to mitigate potential risks, and then they step out of their comfort zones and into action. With each step they take, their confidence builds. They grow. Then they ask themselves what took so long to get started!

- What about you? What are you not doing because you are afraid?
- What does inaction cost you?
- What is one step you can take to get started?

I am interested in your thoughts and comments about this article. Is it helpful? Why? Why not? Send your comments to me at Bill@PullenAssociates.com.

Please share this article with your colleagues. Encourage them to sign up for future articles by visiting www.PullenAssociates.com.

©2006, William J. Pullen, Pullen Associates
