



Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

☐ **Danger: Fear Ahead!!**

Eileen's face lit up when she spoke of her courtship with her husband Steve. "He was so tall and handsome and I was so in love. When he would put his arms around me, I knew that nothing could hurt me." After they married, the relationship grew to be strong and supportive. "Steve was somewhat opinionated and a bit of a worrier, but these traits were very manageable and we got along just fine." In time, things began to change and Steve fell into a severe emotional state. Eileen realized Steve had a problem when business, family, and social activities—that were not in anyway threatening—would begin to make him anxious. He experienced continuous excessive worrying. She also realized that most of his family had similar behaviors. Steve's condition worsened. He began to suffer with insomnia, severe headaches and other physical aches and pains. The marriage became strained because Steve began to transmit his anxiety to his family. Steve could not recognize that his problems were emotional even after a series of medical tests were negative and a thorough examination by his family doctor resulted in a clean bill of health. Finally, he lapsed into a severe state of depression.

Because life is full of dangerous situations, fear is not only unavoidable but often necessary. In the realm of emotions, fear is like friction. Too much friction heats things up, wears them out

prematurely, and hinders movement. With too little friction, things can quickly get out of control and dangerous. That's true about fear as well. We need fear to keep things from spinning dangerously out of control. But too much fear can suffocate creativity and reduce life to mere survival. As an emotional component within each of us, there is a certain amount of fear that is healthy. Healthy fear can serve us well. I vividly remember years ago in Arizona having just finished working in my office one evening late at night. After I locked up I noticed a stray cat peering over a concrete fence next to my car below. Between the fence and the car were four steps that directly led to where the car was parked. Typically the cat never made such a hissing sound as it peered down towards the ground. So while I stood at the top of the walkway looking to see what the cat was so upset about there at the bottom was a 3' diamond back rattlesnake curled up in the path for someone to step on! I still remember how frightened I was as fear shot through every fiber of my being. The primary function of healthy fear is to warn us of danger. It alerts us to our vulnerability and urges us to take precautions. Each of us would be foolish to ignore a warning signal that danger lurks nearby when we are at risk.

The fear alarm functions as a warning signal when danger is near, pushing us to back off and keeping us from harm. Its role is

to protect us. In much the same way that pain functions in the body to alert us that we've been injured and are in need of medical assistance, fear grabs our attention and prepares us for dealing with danger by either getting out of harm's way or by confronting the danger head-on.

The Bible illustrates the healthiness of self-preserving fear in the presence of danger such as David who fled for fear of his life from the presence of a jealously murderous King (1 Sam. 19:10-12; 20:1; 23:17). The dictionary defines fear as a painful emotion or passion excited by the expectation of evil, or the apprehension of impending danger; apprehension; anxiety; solicitude; alarm; dread. Philosopher John Locke wrote: "Fear is an uneasiness of the mind, upon the thought of future danger likely to befall us." Last month we saw several examples of physical and psychological dangers from fear. And in some instances, the rippling effects overwhelm relationships with those closest to us.

☐ **Pathways To A Relational Fear-Factor**

Often the person who seeks counseling is experiencing feelings of fear, insecurity or other severe inner conflicts. The individual is frequently overwhelmed by the amount of anxiety with which he has to deal and is overpowered to the point that he cannot function adequately in his daily living (Psalm 55; Luke 21:34). In an

attempt to relieve the pain this anxiety causes, people engage in a variety of behaviors. One such behavioral expression is **control**. Control often has negative connotations, but it can actually be positive as well as negative. Positive, or natural, control is exercised due to one's position or relationship to another, for example as a boss (Titus 2:9), a parent (Col. 3:20-21) or a system of government (Rom. 13:1-3). Self-control, which is positive, is exercised in an effort to live an orderly life and to maintain meaningful and respectful relationships (Prov. 25:28; Gal. 5:16-24). Before he was king, David exercised appropriate self-control in refusing to kill the man who was after his life (1 Sam. 26: 8-9). When fear feeds and attacks a relationship using abusive control, it is an attempt to dominate another person in order to fulfill one's own desires and to enhance personal security. Those who exercise abusive control have no consideration for those they dominate. Abusive controllers hold people in unnecessary fear or bondage and hinder them, as well as themselves, from fulfilling their potential in life. Over time they lose their influence with others because people get tired of them. Abusive controllers may be well-meaning parents, spouses, friends, children, relatives, employers, colleagues or even spiritual leaders who may not be aware of their harmful behavior. Although they may appear to handle everything with ease and confidence, abusive controllers are dependent, emotionally insecure individuals. Inside they are scared, intimidated and

unfulfilled. *The fear of rejection is the strong motivating force behind their actions.* Abusive controllers have a low sense of self-worth and abandon their own inner problems in favor of "fixing" the other person. In an attempt to fix others, they make excessive demands, and these demands are usually ruthlessly expressed. If the other person doesn't get fixed, abusive controllers perceive themselves as failures. They look to those around them as their own accomplishments. As they destructively manipulate and control others, they feel needed and secure. Another method used to control others is emotional manipulation. Whining, sympathy seeking, tears of helplessness, supposed sickness, outburst of anger/rage, pouting, silence and threats of a physical, emotional, financial or spiritual nature are all methods of emotional manipulation. Silence, which is a form of rejection, is an especially powerful tool in the hands of a controller. Tears of helplessness are also powerful because they are intended to make the victim feel guilty and to feel pity for the controller.

Another destructive type of control is abusive spiritual control. It has nothing to do with true spirituality. Spiritual abusers, "puffed up" with pride, are driven by their lust for power and prestige. They attempt to control others emotionally and spiritually by being "super-spiritual," by controlling prayers, by misusing both Scripture and their spiritual gifts, thus "lording it over" others. This

kind of abusive control can be especially damaging because it attacks the very essence of our being. One cannot live a happy, normal life if being controlled by someone else. Fear that controls or dominates a relationship gives the other a place of power and authority in their life that should only belong to God (2 Tim. 1:7).

A second behavioral manifestation of fear is when an individual is struggling to relieve this internal pressure and feels compelled to do something without understanding why he is doing it. His attempt to gain mastery over himself and his environment is due to several factors:

- Fear of close relationships
- The desire to be liked by everyone
- Distrust of others
- Difficulty in forming meaningful interpersonal relationships
- The inability to gain and maintain self control with a sense of personal integrity
- A poorly defined repertoire of coping mechanisms
- Decreased acceptance of rational authority
- Unsatisfied love needs.

By using **destructive manipulative** fear the anxiety is temporarily decreased thereby allowing the individual the attention he desires to have his immediate needs met. According to the research literature, this type of interpersonal behavioral process is designed to exploit and/or control the behavior of others without regard for their rights, needs or objectives (Phil. 2:3-4). Research reveals there are two forms of

destructive manipulative behavior:

- (1) *overt*, aggressive, hostile behaviors directed against or toward others and/or oneself and
- (2) *covert*, passive behavior that attempts to control others or to get needs met in an indirect manner.

Some behavioral manifestations might include: profuse flattery; extreme tearfulness; lying; cheating; deceitfulness; sneakiness; pretending to be helpful; gift giving with the purpose of obligating the receiver; pitting one person against another; asking for special favors; making excessive, unnecessary demands of significant others; and pre-tending to be self-destructive when they really do not intend to harm themselves. Mental health researchers believe that all people are manipulators to some degree. Not all manipulators are awkward and offensive, but those that are need to change their behavior to be more honest and considerate of themselves and others (Ephesians 4:32). This results in actualizing behavior. A person who is actualizing: trusts his feelings; communicates his needs and preferences; admits to desires and misbehavior; enjoys a worthy foe; offers real help when needed; and is honestly and constructively assertive (Gal. 5:25-26). People who engage in fearful manipulatable behavior are highly skilled at doing so. For most it becomes an art form—to see if they can outsmart the other person. Unfortunately, people who

engage in destructive manipulative behavior are reluctant to seek professional help or to change their behaviors. Engaging in such behavior is destructive because it can hurt and alienate those around them. Their conscience becomes seared—which can lead to behaviors they believe are OK but are contradictory to truth.

A third common behavior seen in counseling that is motivated by fear is the **passive-aggressive**. A passive-aggressive person habitually reacts negatively to the express wishes of others, but usually demonstrates this resistance covertly rather than openly. “Passive/aggressive” implies two assumptions about the cause of this type of recurring negative behavior:

1. The individual is afraid, unable, or unwilling to express aggression openly; or
2. The person has a pervasive feeling of hostility toward others.

Passive-aggressive people may act aggressively in their own self-interest without much regard for others, but be passive and unconcerned when others need a response from them. Usually they are only inwardly aggressive. Outwardly they express their aggressive tendencies through a passive facade. For example, they express anger primarily in subtle, nonverbal ways, rarely openly and in straightforward communication. Inwardly they desire control over the events that affect their lives, but because they fear being put down, they try to get their

needs met through crafty manipulation. The main symptoms of this behavioral style surface in response to authority, society’s demands or the needs of significant others. The passive-aggressive tendencies develop when children are reared by at least one controlling parent. This usually involves a domineering and controlling mother and an absent, weak or passive father. Such parents overprotect their children, make excessive demands on them, respond to them with mixed reactions of acceptance and hostility, and fail to meet their basic trust and dependency needs. All of this fosters a helpless and clinging attitude in children and inhibits the development of independence. Expecting other people to gratify their needs, the children grow up dependent on others to protect them and aid them in their daily responsibilities. They also tend to have low tolerance for frustration and stress. In such a situation, passive-aggressive behaviors develop as an expression of resentment against excessive parental demands. Children are not allowed to openly express hostility and they learn to vent anger and discouragement through more subtle means of rebellious behavior. Such children soon learn that negative behavior (nail biting, bed-wetting, eating problems, procrastination, pouting, obstructionism, stubbornness and intentional inefficiency) will at least get them attention. They may cause problems at school, violate rules and fight frequently with other students. By their teenage years they may lean toward an antisocial

personality and be involved in drugs or delinquency. On the other hand, passive-aggressive people may assume a fearful role of chronic submissiveness and compliance. They find it difficult to say “no,” and they dislike making major decisions. Using that fear while feeling helpless, they look to others – usually to just one other person – to take responsibility for them. They learn to accomplish their goals through passive manipulation of others. Examples of passive-aggressive behaviors include:

- Forgetting appointments, promises and agreements scheduling two things at the same time; or being chronically late.
- Saying unkind things and then saying they really didn’t mean what they said.
- Acting out nonverbally by slamming doors or objects, but denying anything is wrong.
- Becoming confused, tearful, sarcastic or helpless when certain topics come up.
- Getting sick when they’ve promised to do something they really don’t want to do.

Finally, a closely related fear manifestation within interpersonal relationships most seen in counseling is **perfectionism**. A number of the following negative feelings, thoughts, and beliefs may be associated with perfectionism:

Fear of failure. Perfectionists often equate failure to achieve their goals with a lack of personal worth or value.

Fear of making mistakes. Perfectionists often equate mistakes with failure. In

orienting their lives around avoiding mistakes, perfectionists miss opportunities to learn and grow.

Fear of disapproval.

If they let others see their flaws, perfectionists often fear that they will no longer be accepted. Trying to be perfect is a way of trying to protect themselves from criticism, rejection, and disapproval.

Perfectionists tend to anticipate or fear disapproval and rejection from those around them. Given such fear, perfectionists may react defensively to criticism and in doing so frustrate and alienate others. Without realizing it, perfectionists may also apply their unrealistically high standards to others, becoming critical and demanding of them. Furthermore, perfectionists may avoid letting others see their mistakes, not realizing that self-disclosure allows others to perceive them as more human and thus more likeable. Because of this vicious cycle perfectionists often have difficulty being close to people and therefore have less than satisfactory interpersonal relationships.

Steps To Overcome Fear

My experience treating clients incapacitated by fear leads me to my opinion that there is truth in the acronym that FEAR is “False Expectations Appearing Real.” It is therefore necessary to examine the projections of the individual and to assist him or her in looking at alternative results. The chief activator has been self-centered fear —

primarily fear that he will lose something that he already possessed, or would fail to get something that he demanded. He would be in a state of continual disturbance and frustration. Unreasonable fear that his instincts will not be satisfied drives him to covet the possessions of others, to lust for power/control, to become angry when his instinctive demands are threatened, to be envious when the ambitions of others seem to be realized while his are not. He eats, drinks and grabs for more of everything than he needs, fearing that he will never have enough, and with genuine alarm at the prospect of work he stays lazy, he loafs and procrastinates, or at best works grudgingly and under half steam. Therefore, no peace would be had unless we could assist him in finding a means of reducing these demands. It is important that he focuses on realistic goals and expectations for himself and others. Therefore, help should direct the individual to:

1. *Face Their Fears.*

Don’t run! Stand up to them and face them head-on is half the battle. Help them to feel their fears. Don’t try to silence them by getting busy in distracting activities. They need to give themselves permission to feel the trembling, the anguish, the terror. By doing so, they will be able to begin identifying their fears and what’s underneath them. Putting descriptive words to both the feelings and beliefs underlying their fears will equip them to talk more honestly and openly

about their fears with someone who cares, whether a professional or a friend. I also recommend keeping a journal that will help focus their thoughts as they face their fears. Once thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are written out, it will allow them to be more objective with what is going on inside. Reflecting on David again we remember that he was a man who honestly wrestled with his fears. He even wrote it down as an example for us to read in Psalm 55:4-8. When the person you are working with is journaling, it is helpful for them to ask questions that call for detailed answers. Don't ask questions that can be answered with one word. Here are some questions: What am I afraid of right now? What am I trying to avoid facing? If I wasn't afraid right now, what would I do differently? What would have to change for me not to be afraid? What am I afraid will happen in this situation? What do I fear the other person will think of me? What am I afraid will happen if my anxious thoughts are true? What's the worst that could happen? And if that happens, then what? And if that happens, then what?

This last example is called chaining—linking questions together like links in a chain so they can begin to track a pattern to the fear that emerges from the things they have written. As they follow this process of honestly facing their fears, they will be better prepared to examine their findings and learn from their fears instead of running from them.

2. Learn From Their Fears.

Does their fear drive them to rely on God as their Protector or on themselves? The answer to that question is crucial to understanding the passion that drives the fear. We must be careful, however, not to make the assumption that all fear is a spiritual problem of misplaced dependency. While there are many occasions when a lack of trust is the problem, sometimes fear is nothing more than physical exhaustion speaking. When we are not taking care of ourselves physically by eating well, exercising, or getting sufficient sleep, our fears can be amplified and blown out of proportion. Recognizing that we might be “running on empty,” both physically and emotionally, is a sure sign to slow down and take time to nurture ourselves. Usually, things look much brighter and less fearful after a good night's sleep, some nutritious food, or a vigorous walk outdoors. If exhaustion is ruled out as a factor, then quite often the core issue underneath the fear is not fear itself but what we fear. Our fears expose our heart and whom we really serve—man or God. *In the final analysis, what we often learn from our fears is that we have a tendency to allow our fear of others and the dangers we face to eclipse our awe of the omnipotent God we serve, who promised to fight for us (Ps. 56:3-4; Rom. 8:31-32).*

3. Let Go of Unhealthy Fears.

Larry Crabb wrote, “We live in sheer dread of giving up control and abandoning ourselves to God. Only when we discover a desire for Him that is stronger than our desire for

relief from pain will we pay the price necessary to find Him.”

As hard as it may be to admit, demoralizing fear that encourages cowardly retreat is rebellion. When the Israelites' fear was unmasked—exposing their rebellion and contempt for God—their hearts were revealed. Their refusal to believe God and to repent of their preoccupation with the danger ahead and their stubborn demand for safety cost them the Promised Land (Num. 14:21-23). Ask the person you are working with who is exhibiting fear: “What's the first thing on your mind or out of your mouth when facing danger?” Is it David's words, “When I am afraid, I will trust in You”? (Ps. 56:3). If not, they need to confess it to the Lord. They need to turn from their tendency to groan and complain and seek help from sources other than God (Isa. 31:1). Fearing people more than God always has disastrous results. Once released from the enslaving fear of worrying how others may or may not respond will allow them to be free to serve God and others in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

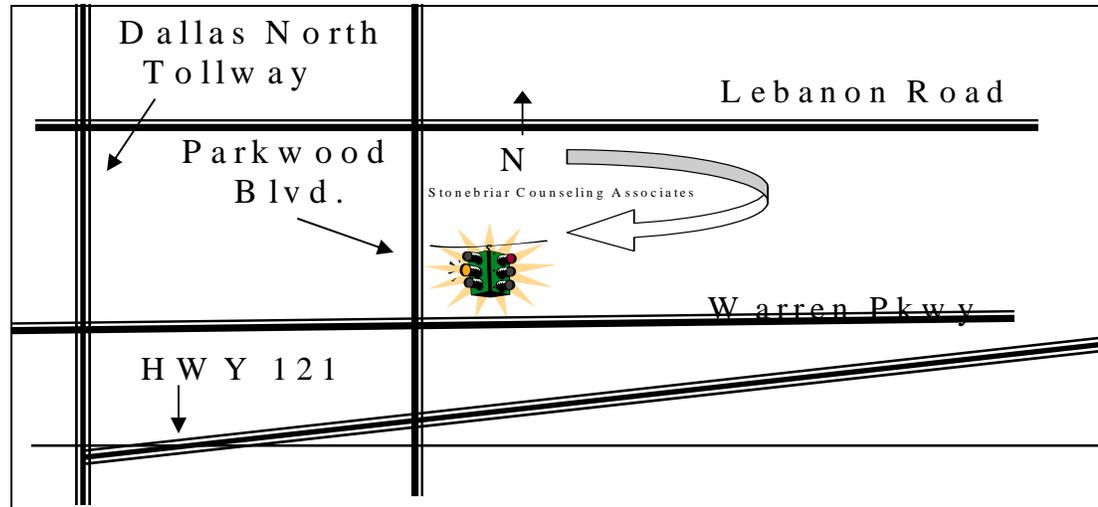
4. Cultivate Healthy Fears.

There are some situations and some people we must simply learn to avoid because they are dangerous. To allow abusive, violent, or deeply addicted people unrestricted access to our lives and relationships is foolish. Prudence, not paranoia, requires that we establish strong and clear boundaries with people who refuse to recognize or take responsibility for the damage they have caused others.

God calls us to obey and follow Him into battle against the forces of evil in the midst of our fears. As we strap on our spiritual armor and prepare for war (Eph. 6:10-18), we must not pretend that fear of the enemy doesn't exist. But we must move forward with conviction and resolve in spite of the genuine threat posed by the flaming arrows of the evil one or the opposition we face from the adversaries in this world. What must preoccupy our thoughts are the reassuring words of Paul: "The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it" (1 Th. 5:24). And "The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2 Th. 3:3). David's words must become the expression of our hearts when cultivating healthy fear: "When I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?" (Ps. 56:3-4).



Check out Our New Web Site:
[www. Stonebriarca.com](http://www.Stonebriarca.com)



Bob Good, April 2005

Mission Statement

Stonebriar Counseling Associates (SCA) is purposefully passionate in providing quality psychotherapy from a Christian perspective that influences the treatment of psychological, emotional, and mental health issues.

To this end, SCA is committed to glorify God by:

- Believing that each person has the innate ability for personal growth and wholeness.
- Seeking a variety of approaches to help you learn new skills and find more choices so as to manage life's changes with a broader range of solutions for recognizing your strengths.
- Accepting all people with respect and love regardless of age, sex, race, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status.
- Thoughtfully affirming and carefully following the morals of the Christian faith and the ethics of the professional governing boards.
- Providing research and development for new and innovative programs, seminars, and workshops in order to further the well-being and self-sufficiency of each client.

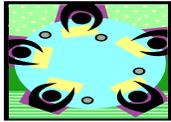




Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

From the desk of...

Bob Good



Reclaiming Higher Ground: Facing Fears Within-Part II

In Luke 12:4-5, Jesus directly addressed the issue of fear with His disciples:

I tell you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him.

This opportunity took place following the fierce opposition He experienced after talking with the Pharisees and experts in the law (Lk. 11:37-53). Jesus must have known that the hostility being directed against Him was frightening His disciples. It was in this setting that He taught them that they should fear God more than other men—even powerful men—because God has the ultimate power of final judgment.

A previous opportunity Jesus had to teach His disciples about fear occurred during an evening boat excursion on the Sea of Galilee (Mk. 4:35-36). They had just completed an exhausting day of ministry. As they climbed into the boat for the ride to the other side, Jesus collapsed onto a cushion in the stern and fell into a deep sleep. The disciples became afraid when a furious squall began swamping their boat, and drowning was a real possibility (vv. 37-40). In complete fear, they shook Jesus awake and screamed, “Don’t You care if we drown?” After He had hushed the wind and the waves with two words, He addressed the disciples’ fears. “Why are you so afraid?” He asked. “Do you still have no faith?” At that moment, the disciples’ fear was elevated to terror as they began to catch a glimpse of who was in the boat with them. Their new awareness that the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth was with them in the boat totally eclipsed their fear of the wind, the waves, and the possibility of drowning. Because they realized that God Himself was in the boat, their whole perspective changed.

The question each of us must ask ourselves is this: “Who is in my boat?” Whenever we fear anything or anyone more than we fear God, a storm surges within. Only the God who says, “Do not fear, for I am with you” (Isa. 41:10) can calm our fear of what man can do to us (Ps. 56:11; 118:6; Heb. 13:6). This month’s article endeavors to look at ways people hurt people and themselves with fear. Even though storms may arise in each person’s life what available solution(s) can we use to help them see that there really is a “peace that passes all understanding?”

Sincerely,

Bob

Fact: Two decades of research indeed have established that breastmilk is far preferable to formula -- for both the baby and the mother! The benefits: breastfeeding: stimulates the release of the hormone oxytocin in the mother's body promoting bonding between mother and baby; prevents endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis; helps prevent future breast cancer in infant girls; promotes higher infant IQ; provides immunization against disease; is more digestible than formula; aids in mother's post-partum physical recovery; helps protect the infant from Crohn's disease, juvenile diabetes, allergies, asthma, SIDS, hemophilus b. virus, cardopulmonary distress, ulcerative colitis, and other medical problems; enhances vaccine effectiveness, D.I., Fidler, V. Huisman, M., Touwen, B.C., Boersma, E.R. (1994). "Neurological differences between 9-year old children fed breast-milk or formula-milk as babies," (1994). Lancet. Nov 12 344(8933):1319-22:

Marrying as a teenager is the highest known risk factor for divorce. People who marry in their teens are two to three times more likely to divorce than people who marry in their twenties or older. Depending on how the age categories are delineated and the length of the time period covered after marriage, teenage marriages have been found to be from two to three times more likely to end in divorce compared to marriages at older ages.

Married life boosts mental health



Fact: A recent study based on marriage rates in the mid-1990s concluded that today's women college graduates are more likely to marry than their non-college peers, despite their older age at first marriage. This is a change from the past, when women with more education were less likely to marry.

Texans and Mental Health

2.8 million Texans have some form of mental illness. By 2003 that number will grow to nearly 3.2 million. (NAMI Texas Report)



The percentage of youths aged 12 to 17 indicating that their parents would strongly disapprove of their smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day increased from 87.8 % in 2000 to 88.9% in 2001. The percentage of youths who felt that their parents would strongly disapprove if they had one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day increased from 87.9% in 2000 to 88.9% in 2001. The percentage reporting strong parental disapproval about trying marijuana or hashish once or twice remained consistent from 2000 to 2001 at 89.5%.



An estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older—about 1 in 5 adults—suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. When applied to the 1998 U.S. Census residential population estimate, this figure translates to 44.3 million people. In addition, 4 of the 10 leading causes of disability in the U.S. and other developed countries are mental disorders—major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Many people suffer from more than one mental disorder at a given time.

Approximately 2.4 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 1.7 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have panic disorder. Panic disorder typically develops in late adolescence or early adulthood.

