



What Are You Scared Of?

What's the issue?

- When Sailors don't understand the meaning of fear, they may not deal with it effectively. They may experience a fear that doesn't make sense, which is unproductive, even destructive. Or they may disregard a serious hazard, either because they are ignorant or because they are afraid of appearing afraid.

What's going on?

- All people feel fear at some time—it is a strong and primitive emotion. At the most basic level, fear alerts us to danger and helps us survive. However, most of us usually don't analyze it or put it in perspective.
- Fear produces two kinds of responses, physical and emotional. The former is automatic and the same for everyone, but the latter varies dramatically. Physical reactions include sweating, increased heart rate and high levels of adrenaline. This physical response is sometimes known as the “fight or flight” response.
- Fear may be perceived as either positive or negative. For people who are afraid of heights, public speaking, or snakes, it is clearly negative.
- Although most people avoid situations in which there is a high risk of actual injury, some people seek fear-inducing situations—an adrenalin rush—often in a safe environment such as watching a horror film in a movie theater or riding on a roller coaster.

What's the solution?

- People should be able to discuss what they are afraid of and examine the reasons why. If a particular fear keeps you from being successful in an activity, perhaps it can be overcome.
- At the same time, when people aren't afraid of things they should be afraid of, they need to get smarter and more realistic. Some novice motorcyclists aren't afraid of going into a curve 20 miles per hour too fast, and some pay the price.

Discussion Items and Open Questions

1. Is fear bad or good? When is it productive, and when does it interfere with things you have to do or want to do?
2. Repeated exposure to similar fear-inducing situations greatly reduces the fear response. Can you see any problems with this situation?
3. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, speaking to the American public during World War II, said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” What did he mean?

Supervisors: Use this page to guide safety discussions with your personnel