

Excerpts from *Mastering Fear: A Navy SEAL's Guide*

By Brandon Webb and John David Mann

Introduction - The Battle is in Your Mind

Mastering fear is not about becoming physically stronger, or tougher, or more stoic. It's about learning how to identify and change the conversation in your head. That ability to self-monitor and redirect your interior dialogue is what takes you from a victim mentality to a proactive mindset.

Control your interior dialogue

- Face the danger. Acknowledge that the physical situation is nowhere near as bad as the story you're spinning in your mind.
- Don't deny your fear. Fear is real. Instead become aware of it and then redirect it.
- Focus on positive action steps you can take, not on what you hope to avoid.

Make fear your ally

- The moment you feel fear again, feel that electric charge of fear and think of it as the buzz of excitement, pointing you toward the prize.
- Ask yourself, "How can I use this static charge to sharpen myself?"
- Fear is not something to fight. It's something to embrace.
- The goal is not to eliminate the fear. You want the adrenaline running, the palms sweating. Harnessing fear can change the course of your destiny.

The roadmap to the prize

There are five legs to the journey from fear to the prize

- Decision – Mastering fear starts with a decision
- Rehearsal – Stretch your comfort zone by preparing
- Letting Go – Fight the urge to retreat back to your comfort zone
- Jumping Off – When the moment comes, it's about action, period
- Know What Matters – What are the most important things in life

Chapter 1 – Decision

The path to mastering fear starts with a moment of decision – personal commitment to take action, even if you don't know what that action is. Make a conscious choice to be someone who makes strong decisions. Practice being decisive.

Learn to trust your gut

- The reason so many fail is that they never really made a conscious decision to do whatever was their goal. The decision must come first.
- Practice separating feelings from logic. Listen to both. Stay suspicious of ego.
- Take your time. Don't let yourself be rushed into important decisions.
- Once you make a decision, follow through and act on it. Don't second guess yourself.

Curate your environment

- Take an inventory of what you read and the media you consume. Does it challenge you, inspire you, stretch you?
- Take an inventory of the people you spend time with. Do they build your knowledge, your confidence and your abilities? Or do they drag you down?
- Cultivate a group of people who challenge you to raise your game.

Chapter 2 – Rehearsal

Effective rehearsal does not eliminate fear or make you impervious to fear; it gives you the tools to fall back on in that moment of maximum stress. Practice creates competence, which breeds confidence.

Master it first in your mind

- Public speaking: See yourself on stage, see the audience, feel the adrenaline
- When you go through your mental rehearsal, focus on doing it right. Don't be sloppy.

Three steps to mental rehearsal

- Listen – pay attention to your inner monologue. If it turns negative, catch yourself and stop it!
- Reframe – figure out what you would like to be thinking. Mentally rehearse what you want to have happen
- Focus – sharpen that picture – send a clear and unambiguous message to your subconscious.

Start in your comfort zone, then stretch it

- Identify the boundaries of your current zone of competence
- Isolate the fundamental elements of the challenge, and practice those under relaxed conditions until they are accurate and complete.
- Now apply repetition and refinement, gradually ramping up speed, scale, etc.
- Push the limits. When you start losing accuracy, scale back again to within your competence zone. Then start pushing the limits again.

Raise the bar

- If you want to raise the level of your performance then focus on raising the level of your rehearsal.
- Rehearse more than you think you need to. Over prepare.
- Constantly raise your standards of rehearsal. Training never stops. Challenge yourself.

Chapter 3 – Letting Go

Once you've prepared as much as possible, there comes a point when you have to let go of whatever safety blanket you've been holding on to that keeps you from diving in.

When opportunity comes, seize it

- Don't get stuck in endless prep. Practice and rehearsal can take you only so far. Don't let it become an excuse for failing to take action when the situation presents itself. You'll never be fully ready.
- Opportunity is not everywhere you look. It comes but very, very seldom. And when it does, too many people blow it because they don't feel prepared enough.
- Tune out the negativity whether it's coming from your negative self-talk, your friends or detractors. Don't fight it, just tune it out, period.
- The great majority of our fears are not in response to genuine danger but are instead a reaction to experiences long behind us.

Understand that safety is an illusion

- Let go of the illusion of safety and security. There is no such thing.
- If you think you can maintain safety, then you'll never risk anything. And you'll really never live.
- Are you satisfied with the life you're living? Or do you have regrets?
- If you have regrets, what steps can you take to engage and eliminate those regrets?
- Every great gain comes about only through risk.

Chapter 4 - Jumping Off

You can't reason or talk your way into this step. And you can't wait for the fear to go away, or until you're 100 percent ready, because neither is going to happen. When the moment comes, it comes, and at that point it's about action, period. Preparation is logical, rational, and methodical. Jumping off is visceral.

Don't let anything stop you

- Resolve that the next time you find yourself in that hesitant gap between decision and action, you will cut the moment short and simply act.
- If you are genuinely not sure and need more time then step firmly back from the edge and take whatever steps you need to take in order to make the decision.
- But once you're as decided as you're going to be, then refuse to allow yourself the luxury of gratuitous hesitation. Just jump.

Make a habit of asking for what you want

- You won't always get what you ask for but if you never make the request, your chances of getting it drop to near zero.
- Develop the habit of asking makes you a more decisive and action-oriented person.
- Daring to ask, or shrinking from asking: either way, it becomes a habit.
- A habit of action or nonaction, adds up to a lifetime of exhilaration or disappointment, excellence or mediocrity, achievement or mere existence.

Have faith in the abyss

- What makes the jump so frightening is that you are relinquishing control to outside forces that no training can fully predict.
- This is the domain not of preparation but of faith.
 - Have faith in the quality of your preparation.
 - Have faith in the decision you have made.
- When you are sure you can't go any further, take just one more step. And then just one more.

Chapter 5 – Knowing What Matters

Mastering fear starts with a decision, but it is knowing what matters that tells you which decision to make and leads you to make it in the first place. There has to be something important, that makes the risk worth it. If you don't know what matters, fear will hold you back. If you're crystal clear on what matters, fear will propel you forward.

Summary

Everything you really want is on the other side of fear. Start with what you fear. Don't suppress it, or fight it, or try to put it behind you. Embrace it. Make it your ally. Trust it. Master it. It will point you in the direction of what matters most.