Conquer Your Fears
So You Can Conquer the World

Nancy Sathre-Vogel
Deep down inside you’re still holding on to your childhood fantasy of being Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman all rolled into you. You are fearless and no obstacle is too big. You want to conquer the world.

And then reality hits.

You’ve grown up and moved beyond those childish fantasies. Now you’re a responsible adult and too mature to harbor silly notions of doing BIG things.

And yet, you still want it. You still want to head out into the world and do great things. You want to, but it’s scary. Too scary, perhaps.

I always laugh when people tell me I’m brave or courageous for cycling around the world with my children. Many people have told me they could never do what I’ve done. I believe otherwise.

I truly believe that you – yes, you – can live the life of your dreams. You can grab hold of life and take it for a ride. It’s easier than you think.
“Aren’t you afraid?” I hear that nearly every day. When I tell people what we’ve done, the first words out of their mouth are frequently, “Aren’t you afraid?”

My response is, “Afraid of what?”

And then... they don’t really know how to answer that question. Worried about people? Most people are good. Worried about animals? Most animals are more scared of us than we are of them. Worried about breaking down in the middle of nowhere? Be prepared.

Our society has trained us to be scared. We’ve grown up with lessons about Stranger Danger and special plugs on our electrical outlets and warnings on strollers about the myriad of ways a child can get hurt in them. We’ve grown up in a society plagued by fear of the unknown and the media has made it sound like danger is lurking around every corner.

Don’t leave home without your cell phone so you can call for help rather than rely on strangers around you! If you break down, stay in your car with your doors locked and don’t allow someone unknown to help! Don’t walk alone at night!

When we actually stop and objectively analyze all those fears holding us back, we’ll find that we really don’t have to worry about the vast majority of them. It kind of cracks me up that people have actually studied this but researchers have found that:

- 40% of the things we worry about never happen
- 30% are in the past and can’t be helped
- 12% involve the affairs of others that are not even our business
- 10% percent relate to sickness, real or imagined.
- That means only 8% percent of the things we worry about are even likely to happen!

Wow. Those are pretty impressive numbers. Think about all the various things you worry about on a daily basis. Now consider how much of what you worry about actually happens. Very little, right?

When I told these stats to a friend one day, he quipped, “See – that’s proof that worry works! If I worry about it, it’ll never happen.” I suppose that’s one way to look at it.

More likely is that we’re wasting time worrying about something that’s not going to happen.
Overcome Your Fears

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, ‘I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.’

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

You must do the thing you think you cannot do.
The key is to identify what we’re afraid of in order to rationally decide if that particular thing is worth worrying about. The more specific we can be, the more likely we’ll be able to figure out how to deal with the fear. The great unknown mass of fear is hard to face. It’s easier to face individual fears.

The hardest part in overcoming fear is identifying what we’re afraid of. Too often “fear” roams freely throughout our brains and we’re not even consciously aware of what we’re afraid of. If we can take some time to break that down and tackle it step by step, we’re more likely to be able to overcome it.
I’ve identified what I believe to be the top 12 fears holding people back from living the life they dream about. Which ones are holding you back?

1. Fear of running out of money or not having enough time

These two go hand-in-hand. It seems like if we have enough time, we don’t have enough money. When we’re working, we have the money but not the time. Although this fear appears to be the biggest hurdle to overcome, it’s actually not. Most of us who live a relatively comfortable life in the USA can make our dreams come true in this regard.

The key is to think creatively. Think of out-of-the-box solutions to the problem. Can you take your work with you? Can you telecommute? Can you create an online business? Can you save money to build up a stash?

Unless you are truly destitute, people poorer than you have managed to save money and/or figure out a job that will allow them to live their dreams. You can do it too.

2. Fear of reactions of others

Nobody wants to be an outcast. It’s written into our genetic code to want acceptance by others. When we make the decision to march to our own drummer, we face the definite possibility of being ostracized by those we love and admire. And others we don’t.

Ultimately, each one of us has to live our own life. Yes, it would be nice if others supported our dreams, but we can’t guarantee that support. We need to forge ahead and be true to ourselves.

The best way to get over this fear is to surround yourself with others who support your dreams. If you can’t find a local group, the internet is a great source of inspiration. Trust me, no matter what your dream, there will be a group on Facebook that will be filled with others with the same dream. Hanging out with them will make you feel normal.
Fear of being inadequate or unprepared

In its essence, this fear says, “I’m not good enough.” I don’t deserve to live my dream or I’m not strong enough or I don’t know enough. Dreams are for other people, but I’m not worthy.

I ask you why? Why would someone else be good enough, but not you? How did those others get to be good enough? Were they born into it or did they make that happen?

I can assure you they made it happen. Nobody is handed their dream on a silver platter. They worked for it, you can too. Yes, you can make it happen. You may have more to learn and many steps to take, but you deserve it. Don’t underestimate yourself.

Fear of future career implications

Especially if you work in a fast-changing field like IT, it can be scary to take time away. Will you still be marketable if you take a year or two off? Will your industry have taken off and left you in the dust? Will you EVER be able to find a job again?

Those fears are perfectly valid, and certainly bear consideration. It’s also important to consider the options.

What if your adventures change you to the point where you no longer want to go back to doing what you did before? What if new doors open as a result of you following your passion?

What if?

Are you willing to revolve your life around a what if? At what point will you trust in yourself and in your abilities to work it out?
Fear of achieving your dream

This one is very counter-intuitive. For years you’ve dreamed of pursuing your passion. You’ve spent hours thinking about it and fantasizing about how awesome it’ll be. You’ve held that dream near and dear from so many years, it’s scary to actually achieve it.

If you achieve it, you’ll no longer have that carrot to chase after. You’ll no longer have a goal to pursue. You’ll be adrift.

In the end, consider yourself on your deathbed. Would you rather look back upon your life and say, “I had a dream” or “I lived my dream”?

Fear of failure

Logically, this fear makes no sense – not that that minor detail stops any of us from feeling it.

If you head out the door and give your dream your best effort, you might have a 50/50 chance of success. If you don’t even try, you’ve got a 100% chance of failure. When you look at it that way, which odds are better?

Yes, you might fail. You might fall flat on your face and fail in a mighty way. It’s possible that you’ll come crawling home with your tail between your legs.

But so what? Even if you fail, you will have learned something – most likely you will have learned a lot. Is it really failing if you learn something?
Fear of not having the tools to dream or to make it happen

Many of us grow up thinking dreams are for other people and we aren’t sure how to make them happen.

In addition to needing to believe your dream can actually happen, you need to have the boots-on-the-ground knowledge of how to attack a dream, break it down into bite-sized chunks and make it real. That’s hard stuff for a lot of people.

Fortunately, there are resources out there to help with that part of the dream. Don’t be afraid to look.

Fear of if it will be good for all involved

After being afraid of failing, this was the second biggest for me. What if we didn’t like it? What if the kids would have been better off in a classroom? What if...?

The good news is that you can always turn around and head back if you discover your dream isn’t meeting your goals. If you realize the dream isn’t as good for you as you thought it would be, you can either change gears to make it good, or you can go back to your old life.

I’ll be honest with you though – I’m in touch with hundreds of families who are out living their dream and not one has felt it wasn’t beneficial for the whole family. Chances are it’ll be good for yours too.
Fear of medical concerns

Medical issues are terrifying no matter where you are. It’s even worse when you’re in some far flung corner of the world where you don’t know a soul.

But really, how often do you have a critical injury or health issue at home? Why would you be more likely to have one elsewhere?

Apart from the fact that you most likely won’t need intensive medical care no matter where you are, it’s also important to remember that people get sick all over the world. There are doctors all over the world. The doctor in your hometown isn’t necessarily the best or the only.

Make sure you have emergency medical evacuation just in case the worst happens, then go enjoy yourself. Worrying about these issues won’t solve a blim-blam thing.

Fear of kids’ schooling/socialization

Our society has trained us to believe that kids need to go to school within a brick and mortar school building. We’ve been led to believe that schools have all the answers and have a scientifically designed curriculum to make sure kids learn everything they need to know.

I spent 21 years working as a classroom teacher from grades 1 – 9 and I’ve sat on more curriculum committees than I care to think about. I’ve spent hour upon hour hammering out that “scientifically designed curriculum” – and, trust me, it’s NOT scientifically designed.

In the end, it doesn’t matter if a child learns the phases of the moon in third grade or fifth. If we’re really honest with ourselves, we can even say it doesn’t matter if a child learns the phases of the moon or the parts of a flower at all!

As long as he learns how to learn, he’ll be able to find out all that other knowledge when he needs it.

The socialization issue is a non-issue. Simply make sure your child meets and interacts with others of all ages, and he’ll know how to do it. In other words, don’t lock him in a closet. Like you would consider it anyway...
Fear of the unknown

The big bad boogeyman is out to get us, right? Most of us outgrew our fear of the boogeyman, but for some reason still fear the unknown.

Why is the unknown so scary?

Because it’s unknown. The unknown is filled with all sorts of things – thieves, rapists, and murderers. Vicious wild animals. Food laden with poison. The unknown is a beast lurking beyond the next corner, ready to swallow us whole should we dare show our face.

We’ve got a million questions roaming unchecked in our minds with no answers to any of them. The only way we’ll find the answers to head out into the void and discover the answers when we get there. It’s not as scary as it seems – trust me.

Fear of just plain ol’ not liking it

After all the hours you’ve spent planning and preparing, what if you get out there and find it’s not as magical as you hoped?

I can tell with certainty that it won’t be. It won’t be as glamorous and exotic as your dreams made it out to be. It’ll be plain ol’ hard work – but so worth it.

All I can do here is repeat what I said above. You can always turn around and head back if you discover your dream isn’t meeting your goals. If you realize the dream isn’t as good for you as you thought it would be, you can either change gears to make it good, or you can go back to your old life.

In either scenario, you will have learned loads about many different facets of life. You’ll have learned how to work toward a goal and make it happen. You’ll have learned what you like and what you don’t. You’ll have learned that you CAN live your dream – you just need to figure out what it is. Is that really so bad?
We can allow fear to stop us from living life fully or we can choose to embrace it and live anyway. What’s your choice?

**Reality of Fear**

You are not scared of the dark.
You're scared of what’s in it.

You’re not afraid of heights.
You are afraid of falling.

You’re not afraid failure.
You’re afraid of the feeling of worthlessness that might bring.

You are not afraid of what others think.
You’re afraid of how that will make you feel.

You’re not afraid to try again.
You’re afraid of failure and of getting hurt again.

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As soon as you define your dream, you will be besieged by normal fears. Remember that nearly all of those fears will never materialize.

It’s not until you have the courage to step off the ledge that you’ll realize you’ve had wings all along.

~Gail Lynne Goodwin

www.familyonbikes.org