

**NAME**

The Gift of Fear Audio.mp3

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**START OF TRANSCRIPT****[00:00:00]**

Good morning, WellSpring's, whether seasoned or new WellSpringers, I'm glad to be with you digitally this morning, wherever you are. Just like Rodney said recently, this series of messages on how to be afraid called out to me. To that image that leaped into my mind was when you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on that rope. I think we could call it the rope of resistance. So I'll go back to that later when we get to the end of our rope. Fear can push us that far. We can mean different emotions when we say fear. There's the fear that helps us survive. And then there's the fear that drains our energy dread. The fear that helps us survive throws us some commands like this, it could go.

**[00:00:55]**

Every creature on earth, including humans, has that saving fear in the face of hazard or danger or pain. Fear will command us to flee or fight. Or freeze.

**[00:01:12]**

Just like last year, I was out in the high desert of Prescott, Arizona, I was visiting my goddaughter as usual, and one morning real early, I sauntered out to the covered porch. I had a mug of coffee in my hand. I flung myself down in a nice swivel chair and I was ready to watch the sunrise over Thumb Butte and suddenly a motion out of the corner of my eye.

**[00:01:37]**

I froze. It was a snake. I didn't think freeze. I just froze even before the front of my brain realized there was emotion, there was a snake. It was a diamond patterned snake, thank God it was slithering away from me, kind of hugging the edge of the porch, trying to get away from me.

**[00:02:05]**

So I think when I flung myself down in that chair, the snakes fear told it flee escape from me. His command ordered him to flee. That is fear as a gift of nature in the face of actual hazard, whether it snakes. Or sharks. Or the predator who is most dangerous to humans. Humans, each other, we sometimes have reason to fear violence from other humans.

**[00:02:43]**

There's a guy who has had a long career in keeping prominent people safe from violence. For instance, he's the guy who developed the processes used to predict and avoid the stalkers who are dangerous to the justices of the Supreme Court. His advanced training is provided to police departments, to federal agencies and universities. His name is Gavin de Becker, and he wrote the book The Gift of Fear. Mr. deBecker. And I'm going to call him Gavin writes very engaging descriptions of real episodes, the real warning signals that predict actual violence. Gavin wants us as a society to get smarter about figuring out what is real danger and what is our dread. He points out we suffer way too much from dread. Think for a moment right now about what it is that you dread. As far as I know, we all dread something. Gavin points out that dread is that occurs not in the face of hazard like snakes or stalkers. Instead, dread is the result of the human ability to imagine an outcome. I dread meeting a snake again. The snake cannot dread meeting me. We humans really can't imagine outcomes, Mark Twain, toward the end of his life, wrote, I have had many troubles, but most of them never happened. Yeah, me too. Snakes are rare in my life, dread, though, is commonplace.

**[00:04:25]**

Let me be very candid. I dread losing my husband. I dread it so bad that I have fewer symptoms if he even goes to the grocery store. And that was before covid. Whenever dread grabs me, I have a method that I use to strengthen my rope of resilience. I think of folks who have it worse than I do that dials up compassion for them and gratitude that I don't have it worse. Let me give you an example. Many of you may remember that Pete and I are each 30 years into our second marriage. Previously, I was married twenty six years to a naval officer. He served in harm's

way in the South China Sea for two long tours during the Vietnam struggles, while I and our little first born still duty in the home port. It was a time of unrelenting dread for me, as well as for many, if not most of us. I dreaded a visit from the CACO, the casualty officer who comes to let you know that your loved one has given that last full measure of devotion. Instead of visiting the chemical called me, he said, I'm calling you from the casualty office, do not panic. We're calling because the evening news will announce that your husband's ship is missing.

**[00:05:50]**

We've not yet designated it as missing in action. We're still searching for it. Well, so, of course, I panicked. Anyway, I froze. To get a grip, I focused on those who were worse off. Those whose loved ones were missing in action. My mantra then was, I'm lucky so far, I'm lucky so far, and Wellspring's I was lucky there was a happy ending here. So 10 eternal days after the CACO had called, I answer the phone and there was Robert's voice. Hi, how's it going? You know what I said? After 10 days in the dread pit, what the hell are you? And then I burst into laughter of relief. If you're curious, the ship was under secondary orders to leave the gun line, run silent and chase a Russian sub all the way back to Vladivostok. The ship did not know that they had made the news and homeport. But, you know, I still mourn for those whose loved ones wherever they served. Who are missing in action? OK, so Dredd can be excruciatingly painful. In his book, *The Gift of Fear*, that Gavin de Becker gives us two powerful suggestions to reduce some of the pain of dread, that pain, you know, it drains our energy and might even immobilize us.

**[00:07:22]**

So Gavin suggests mindfulness. Well, wellSpringers, new and seasoned have the advantage here every Wednesday, Reverend Can conducts a mindfulness session. So but Gavin points out, pay attention to what is actually going on and notice this. Whatever we dread is not actually happening right now. So let that sink in for a second, dread is fear of what might happen. It's not happening right now. So notice the outcome that you're predicting and stop focusing on it just for this moment, then catch yourself and stop in the next moment and the next one be mindful. The second suggestion, Gavin says, our dread is composed of a chain of fears, each link. Is it a mostly unnoticed spiral into a more profound threat? He encourages us to look for the links particular to our own chain of fears. In his book, *Gift of Fear*, Gavin explains the links this way and let me read.

**[00:08:42]**

Surveys have shown that ranking very close to the fear, death is the fear of public speaking. Why would someone feel profound fear deep in his or her stomach about public speaking when it's so far from death because it isn't so far from death when we link it, it's not just the fear of embarrassment. It's linked to the fear of being perceived as incompetent, which is linked to the fear of loss of employment, loss of home, loss of family, of your ability to contribute to society, of your value. In short, to loss of your identity and your life. So dread of public speaking is linked chain by dreadful chain to dredging loss of life. No wonder it ranks as such a threat, and had I known about links back in the Vietnam time, I could have traced the depth of my fear of loss in losing my beloved. I will no longer be a wife. I'm not strong enough to make it alone. I'll collapse and fail as a mother. My child will lose her future. I'll be alone forever. Well, that was a nasty spiral of fears, no wonder we each need resilience to help us keep going. So Gavins two Suggestions can provide some relief to the depth of our dread distinguished distinguish the links and mindfully then enjoy some relief. There is joy in the present moment. Thankful the actual thing we fear is not happening right now.

**[00:10:22]**

And there's more we aspired to live, charged full with the charge of the soul to live charged full, we can strengthen our resiliency, we can be respectful of our gift of survival. And we can be mindful of our fearfulness. It is possible to live joyfully with our fears, a sidekick we can take on what we aspire to alongside our fear or our dread. Into my own rope of resilience, I wove a spiritual practice, it's a prayer that has sustained me for twenty five years now. And here's the situation. When my second grandson was three weeks old at about midnight while I was holding him, he went into seizures. He's now twenty five years old. So this story has a happy ending at the small nearby hospital in Joshua, Texas. He arrested the first time and was resuscitated. And then he was rushed to Cookes Children's Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas, and connected to many monitors and machines. His prognosis? No prediction of his pediatric neurologist. This baby can't live till morning. If there are religious rights, please do them immediately. I was overcome with dread through the night. I paced and paced and prayed. I identify as a mystic universalist and I have to say I prayed as a longing into the universe. I did not ask for an outcome. Instead, there were four qualities I repeated then as a mantra strength.

**[00:12:07]**

Healing. Mercy.

**[00:12:11]**

And Grace. Through the night, I paced and prayed. Over and over, just asking for these qualities to sustain me through trauma, grief, frustration and despair.

**[00:12:28]**

Many of you know, my husband, Pete and I are very active in gun violence prevention. Two years ago, just over 100 grassroots gun violence prevention organizations sent folks to a conference at the Sheraton in Denver. All of us were survivors. You may remember that folks who have been deeply impacted by gun violence are called survivors,

even if they've not been shot. Pete and I are compelled by a devastating gun violence loss in our family there at the conference where parents and teachers from the slaughter at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the kids are now organizers from March for our lives. They'd witnessed their classmates shot. So during the conference Saturday morning, Pete was up front as a panelist when the fire alarm began blaring, it's warning. One of our survivors who's now a trauma counselor, called out for survivors who are not triggered to come forward right away. And I admit my heart is clenched, but I taken a couple of deep breaths and was OK. Now, eight teenagers from March for our lives were seated up front at the beginning of my aisle and one of them looked to be going into shock.

**[00:13:49]**

She was dead white. She was trembling pretty hard. So I grabbed her hands to help steady her. And two of the other kids got up, came around and grabbed hold of me and hung on for dear life. I have to admit, I thought disruptors had arrived armed, but it was a false alarm and the and really apologized that evening. Our scheduled vigil was a time of mourning and of gathering comfort to sustain each other in our efforts to prevent loss and grief for other families. The organizers had asked me to offer a few words with a few words of solace. I invited everyone to join me in my prayer that has sustained me. I told them my prayer was very short. I would repeat it three times. I ask if they would say the prayer out loud with me or if that's not their way to focus silently on each word, then together out loud, more than 80 survivors joined me in praying for these qualities, which charge me full with faith that everyone, every being, deserves strength.

**[00:15:05]**

Healing mercy. And Grace. Amen, and may you live in blessing.

**[00:15:14]**

Wherever you are this morning, would you pray with me, God of our hearts? We long to be charged for with the charge of the soul, we are always grateful for strength.

**[00:15:29]**

Heeling. Mercy. And Grace. Amen.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**



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