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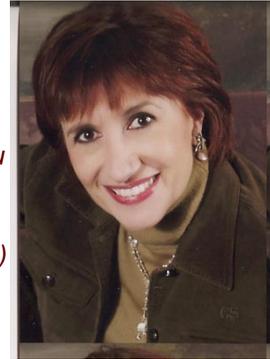
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Dear Reader,

Fear Keeps Us Going

"The best thing about fear is that it makes you smarter."

*-- Jeff Mugleston
(sports school manager)*



Four years ago I wrote about lessons learned from the Winter Olympics. This time around, and with the current popularity of neuroscience, it's all about how the brain of an Olympian reacts: Living on the edge of the edge, yet completely present in each moment; taking the extreme risk, yet confidently relying on an inner guidance. Way back in the 1968 Winter Olympics, Peter Olenick tried a new twisty, somersaulting double flip with 20 feet of air, in the halfpipe and was terrified when he first did it -- he didn't even know if it could be done. But like most Olympians, he visualized it over and over again in his head. His brain told him it was possible. The first time he executed this trick, he was exhilarated. However, when attempting it again, it was much scarier. The body memorized the event and knew what was happening. Now, there was the awareness of risk. Luckily, for Olympians, they just can't get enough of it! Today, Shaun White soars to a height of 30 feet.



Fear is what everybody feels out there on Olympic ice and slopes. It affects every athlete. The fear of falling and crashing. How they deal with it is the miracle on ice. So, what happens when a skier crashes? She remembers what happened, but now visualizes herself doing it better. She mentally takes each bend and twist of the downhill run and makes it. What Olympians do is face up to the fall and revise the scary memory of the event while it is still fresh in their minds. The skier who crashed is recalling the unpleasant memory circuit and overlaying it with a vision of herself standing up on her skis and having a successful run. You could say that the difference between us and them is their turn around time from a scary memory to reframing

it. When an Olympic ice skater falls, his memory overlay is almost as fast as a light switch going off and on again.

How does this relate to our everyday world?

Try this experiment next time you are gripped by fear:

- 1. Relive the experience as quickly as possibly (when it happens)*
- 2. Without delay or turning away, rethink it (do it better, differently)*
- 3. Remember, the memory has to be fresh, to be susceptible to revision. Otherwise, your brain will file it away and associate it with fear.*
- 4. The technique won't change the memory but it will change the emotion around it.*

The reason fear makes us smarter is because we learn how to protect ourselves for the next time something happens. The super-G skier who crashed before, will now carefully visualize the ruts, sharp turns and maneuver ever split second of the way better than before. She is also prepared for tumbles by wearing a helmet, padding and wrist guards (a support mechanism in my jargon).

Takeaway for the workplace:

- Reframe your bad experience without delay
- Do it better next time
- Protect yourself with ("padding") more knowledge and skills
- Get back in the rink of life

Article inspired by New York Times' Gretchen Reynolds' story on "Overcoming Fear" and Daniela Schiller's "blue squares" research at NYU.

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The Frog Story



The Frog Story

There were two frogs that hopped along a path, and lo and behold they found themselves leaping unexpectedly into a deep well. Although they pondered the situation and tried hopping out, the depth of the well made their circumstances seem hopeless.

Other frogs arrived, hearing their croaking cries for help. However, as the new frogs appraised the situation, it appeared to them, too, that there was no way out. So they called down to the two frogs who were hopping as high as they could to forget it, accept their fate, and live out the remaining time of their lives in the bottom of the well.

One of the frogs, hearing the advice of the others, decided after a few more tries that they were right. He stopped and sat dejectedly at the bottom of the well.

However, the other frog seemed undeterred. The more the frogs at the top told him to stop, the more he jumped. The more they waved at him to give it up, the more he attempted to go just a little bit higher.

All of a sudden, with one extraordinary leap, the frog leaped over the top of the well, freed from his entrapment. The other frogs were stunned and amazed.

The frogs circled him and asked how he'd done it. However, he couldn't hear them, for he was deaf.

The frog who freed himself thought the other frogs who were discouraging him were actually cheering him on, and because of this he did not give up.

Team USA has been encouraging, cheering and motivating each other on from day 1 in Vancouver. The success of one member spurred on others to win. Each team member's success intensified their momentum. While teams may bicker, fight and compete with each other, when a common goal connected to meaningful rewards compels the team, there's no telling just how hard they'll work for it.

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Have a Joyful Month,



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