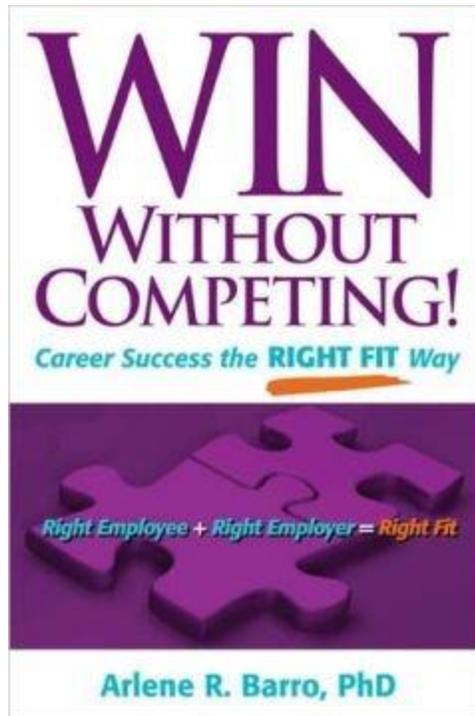


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene — Fear Causes Stress



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By Dr. Arlene Barro

Is fear imprisoning you? If fear controls your behavior, then it could become your master. In some situations fear is beneficial because it alerts us to danger. Do you recognize warning signs and take charge appropriately or do you ignore these signs?

Eliminate the fear master

It is critical to use fear to prevent or reduce potential problems. What we must eliminate is the tendency to focus on fear and allow that to govern our behavior. As fear increases, so does stress. What can you do? Change your mindset and then your behavior. If fear becomes your master, you could immobilize yourself. I have observed that some of my clients start walking down this road when they experience sudden job loss, death of parent or spouse, or chronic disease such as cancer. I guide my clients to change their mindset and behavior as quickly as possible. To do that, they learn how to use my Right Fit strategies to cast off the fear master. Then they are ready to move forward.

For example, if an employee experiences a sudden job loss, complaining about the employer distracts the job seeker from searching for a new position. The results: no job and lots of stress, unless money is not an issue. Wise job seekers see the job loss as an opportunity to reflect on their next career step. Of critical importance is figuring out their current core identity and distinctive career brand. These initial steps set the stage to incorporate the new career brand in the resume and presenting that brand to employers.

More downsizing is expected at the end of the summer. Watch for the red flags to avoid an unwelcome surprise. If you see the red flags, become the wise job seeker before you are downsized.

Manage fear of risk and the unknown

I visualize a coin. I see risk on one side and the unknown on the other side. Imagine adding cultural change to risk and the unknown. That is exactly what I did. I moved from a luxury building in Chevy Chase, Md. to a medical resident apartment building in Beersheba, Israel. Why? Ben Gurion University invited me to serve as an Associate Professor of Medical Education for one year. They wanted to benefit from the research I had reported in my monograph on physician performance and my contribution to medical education.

When I arrived in Israel, I experienced the unexpected. The city of Tel Aviv was extraordinarily noisy. Little did I know what was waiting for me in Beersheba.

A taxi driver drove me many miles to my new apartment. When we entered, the hallways in the building were pitch black. The lights were not working. We walked up several flights of stairs until we reached the top. It is amazing that he was able to navigate my luggage, unlock the door, and deliver me. This is what I saw. Two small bedrooms with cots. Folded sheets were on top of the beds. Because it was very late, I decided to use their sheets rather than unpacking mine. That was a mistake. When I unfolded the sheets, I saw large dried blood stains all over the sheets. Clearly it was time to unpack.

I walked into the kitchen which had no stove and a very small refrigerator. I looked into the bathroom and saw a shower with no enclosure. After taking a shower, the water needed to be pushed down the drain with a special mop.

The next morning I went to the medical school and told them that I needed to find an apartment. And so I did, which is another story. As for the sheets, the medical school had given me hospital sheets.

After I moved into my beautiful apartment, I spent a delightful year in Israel with many challenges to overcome. I created solutions for each challenge that I could control which enabled me to keep my stress low. Managing risk, the unknown, and cultural change are the hallmarks of my Israeli adventure. Do not allow fear to hold you back from experiencing life.

Think ageless, minimize fear of aging

In my June 22 column: *Aging Causes Stress*. I invited readers to share their stories. Here is a powerful response to my request.

Sean Elliott at age 81 is ageless

“Age is a state of mind. Regardless of your chronological age or physical state, you are who you think you are. Pledge yourself to live and function accordingly. I, for my part, being 81 years of “age”, am committed to die young in spirit. My few remaining peers are, largely, either doddering, demented, or retired. The principal reason, based on my observations, is that they were forced or persuaded to stop living, choosing or resigned either to conform to the conventional image of the “elderly,” or “living” by proxy through the lives of their children. Do not acquiesce to this fate. Life is worth living and doing ... until you can’t.

I am an investment banker, still at my post five days a week advising my clients and doing or assisting deals some of which (yes!) have a 10-year time horizon. I run three miles a day five days a week (slower, admittedly, and less than my former six miles), and weigh the same as I did 60 years ago. Discipline. Commitment. Think young. Be the self you pledge to be. You will live better and longer. Trust me. The game is worth the candle.” -

Sean Elliott

If you think of yourself as “ageless” the fear of aging and the stress associated with it will fade. Every birthday reflect on what activities you will do to live another exciting ageless year. Remember Elliott’s philosophy to inspire you. Keep the ageless candle lit. The result is certainly worth the effort and the time.

How are you managing fear?

If fear is your master, share what you have tried to do to overcome your fear. What role has stress played? Email your response to drbarro@barroglobal.com. Your story may appear in my next column.

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