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4 Powerful Lessons from a Day Riding Roller Coasters

I never expected to leave the amusement park feeling the way that I did.

I didn't expect to leave there learning life lessons. I didn't expect to walk away with a sense of accomplishment or pride.

But I did. I left there learning 4 powerful lessons about life, fear, leadership, and even parenting.

Last week, Tara and I went to Cedar Point in Ohio. It was our birthday present to ourselves.

It was a three-day getaway for the two of us and I enjoyed the time off. But, I also had my eyes open for learning opportunities and stories to share with you. That's what I do, after all.

By the end of the day, we'd ridden 8 large roller coasters a total of 15 times, including once on the 2nd tallest coaster in the world (pictured on the right). The Top Thrill Dragster goes 0 to 120 mph in 3.8 seconds, up 420 feet in a corkscrew and then down the same way.

The next day I reflected on the day of roller coaster riding and realized I found 4 powerful lessons for all of us.

1. Your greatest joys are usually on the other side of your greatest fears.

I don't like roller coasters...or at least I didn't before last week.

I hadn't ridden one since the age of 11 (I'm 35 now). I'm not entirely sure the one I rode then qualifies as a roller coaster even. Perhaps spinning teacup is more accurate. And yet...by 9:45 that night, I was the one leading the way to get in just one more ride.

At the beginning of almost every ride, I was terrified. By the time we were 10 seconds into the ride, I was having a blast.

Life is just like that. Our greatest joys usually come after conquering our [greatest fears](#).

Maybe it's making the commitment to spend your life with that one man or one woman. Or maybe it's taking the entrepreneurial plunge or adopting a child. Or maybe for you, like me, it's going 120 mph then up and down 420 feet.

I faced my fears and can't stop talking about it. Seriously, I won't shut up about that day. The thrill was more than worth the fearful anticipation.

When you face fear in life, remember these words from [Stephen Pressfield](#):

...fear is an indicator. Fear tells us what we have to do.

Fear tells you what you must do. Why? Because on the other side of that fear is your greatest accomplishment, your most significant contribution, your greatest joy.

(Related Post: [The Benefit of Fear](#))

2. Conquering fear gets easier with repetition.

I was terrified on the first ride we rode.

I could hardly keep my legs from buckling in the short line to wait and once we got on the ride, I held on as tightly as possible. After getting off, it felt like I'd just worked out for hours. My arms were that sore.

The second and third rides weren't any better. Nor was the fourth. But by the fifth ride, I slowly began to...actually enjoy myself. Sure, I was still nervous pre-ride, but less so than in the beginning.

I was soon laughing during the rides and enjoying the view on the way up. The twists and turns became exhilarating, not terrifying.

When we conquer one fear, the next one gets a little easier. And it continues to get easier and easier.

Conquering fear is like exercising a muscle. The more you work it, the stronger it gets. This is what Arianna Huffington had to say about it:

What long-lasting fear have you yet to face? Conquering that one fear could be the gateway to conquering many more fears. It could be the one thing that could completely change your life.

3. Keep your eyes open when facing your fears.

On the first few rides, I could barely keep my eyes open. And by "barely keep them open," I mean they were "tightly shut."

By ride number four, they were open the entire time. And guess what? It was a lot more fun.

Fear is best conquered head on, with your eyes wide open. Think of David and Goliath. David didn't run at Goliath with his eyes closed. They were wide open, focused right at Goliath's head.

Our fears are the same way. We need to be alert. If you keep your eyes open, you just might find, as I did, that you discover some really cool things along the way.

As I rode each successive roller coaster, they seemed to slow down and I could see things I'd missed early on. The horizon of Lake Erie, the sunset, the boats screaming along the water, the beauty that was all around me.

There is so much to see...don't miss it with your eyes, your heart, or your mind closed.

4. Bonus Parenting Lesson

This one has nothing to do with fear or even roller coasters, but it's a lesson I learned in the strangest place:

The men's bathroom.

A dad and his son were in front of me waiting in line. Both were wearing the same \$90 wristband that I was. The one that gets you to the front of the line and cuts the average wait time for a ride from one hour to less than ten minutes.

The dad said to his son (and I will hopefully never forget these words):

I don't want to hear any complaining about the lines today. Some people will have to wait a lot longer than us. You don't deserve the Fast Lane pass, son. This is a privilege. You should be thankful for this.

He didn't say it in harsh tone, but in the tone of a loving father teaching his child a lesson. His son is blessed and got to do something that most kids don't at that age. So his dad took the time to teach him a life lesson.

We all want our children to be better off than we are. We want our children to live in a nicer house than we ever did, to experience things we didn't. But we also must keep them in check and make sure they know how blessed they are.

I have a good feeling about that kid.

What lessons have you learned about conquering fear over the years? I'd love for you to share them below in the comments.