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The Benefit of Fear

You need fear.

You need fear like Superman needed Lex Luther. Or like you need a steep hill at the very end of long run.

That is how much you need fear. It is vital to life, to finding your calling.

What Fear Tells Us

In his bestseller, [*War of Art*](#), Steven Pressfield writes,

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

He goes on to say that,

The more scared we are of a work or calling, the more sure we can be that we *have* to do it.
(emphasis mine)

Important work scares you. Important work invokes fear. Important work calls out to fear and says, "hey, something amazing is about to happen, you'd better come stop it."

The thing you have to do (your calling) will always be opposed. It will always stretch you. Fear will tell you that you are not qualified. It will tell you that you don't have enough experience, training or knowledge. It will tell you that you will be uncomfortable.

It will tell you that you will fail.

How to Use Fear

But that same fear, that same doubt, and that same voice in your head telling you to stay in your comfort zone...*that* is the voice that is secretly telling you:

This is what you have been made for.
This is your life's work, your purpose, your reason for being.
Without this one thing, you will never find contentment or joy.
If you give in, I will always haunt you; always remind you that you listened to me.
I will own you.

A Lesson from Actors

Actors who stretch are the ones who get rave reviews. They are the ones who win awards. And they are the ones who have the most professional satisfaction.

When the creator of the hit TV show *Breaking Bad*, a serious drama, was looking for a lead actor, he chose Bryan Cranston. The producers only knew him from his role as the goofy father on the comedy *Malcolm in the Middle*. They said this role was too much of a stretch for him.

That is exactly why he was perfect for the role. His awards speak for themselves.

Or think about Robin Williams at his finest. You think of *Dead Poet's Society* and *Good Will Hunting*, don't you? Not *Mork and Mindy*.

Why? *Because the roles stretched him.* They called on him to go beyond what he thought was possible, to dare to step outside of his comfort zone and what others expected, and he made two hit movies and became a superstar in Hollywood.

The critics scoffed when he was cast, even for *Good Will Hunting*. They said *Dead Poet's Society* was a one-time thing. The critics were the voice of fear. They could have persuaded Robin Williams to give up or to never try, but they only made it clearer that the roles were right for him.

Before *Dead Poet's Society*, fear probably told him, "Robin, you are a comedian. Take the comfortable role. This job is too hard. What if I fail? Can I ever go back to comedy?"

But he shut fear up. He followed his calling. He stretched...and his greatest stretches produced his greatest successes.

Listen to fear. It's telling you what is important. That is why you need it.

How can you use fear to discover your calling?