

Fear

The Monster in the Closet

We all have our monsters, whatever they may be. For some, it's fear of failure. For others it's lack of self-confidence. And then there are other monsters like fear of relationships, or fear of risk, or fear of being vulnerable, or fear of rejection. Then there's the more obvious one's like fear of heights or confined spaces or crowds. The list is extensive, but we all have our monsters.

Monsters are really exaggerated fears. Typically, to some degree our fears have some element of legitimacy. But we make them into something huge. It seems that we have the capacity to think things into sizes that they're not. Our own thinking or pondering rolls the situation over in our mind enough that much a like a snowball down a hill, it gets bigger as it goes.

Our Need to Control

Over thinking our fears grows monsters out of them. Why do we think about things so much? Thinking is often our effort to exercise some element of control when we feel we have none. The better we understand something, the better we can control it. Pondering, contemplating, dwelling on something and even outright obsession can be our attempt to grab hold of a part of whatever is facing us so that we can wrestle it to the ground and hopefully eradicate it.

That's good to a point. However, the more we "think on something" the bigger it feels or the bigger we make it. The bigger it gets, whether real or imagined, the more we need to control it. The more we need to control it, the more we think about it. The more we think about it, the bigger it gets . . . and so on. Out of this cycle grows our monsters.

Fact or Fiction?

The other thing that grows monsters is the creativity of our own minds. The longer we avoid dealing with our fears, the more unfamiliar we become with those fears. Fact eventually gives way to fiction. We give those fears attributes or characteristics or strengths that they don't have. In making them worse than what they really are, we're in actuality giving ourselves permission not to deal with them. We make our fears so horrible and so gargantuan that avoiding them becomes the right and sensible choice.

Having granted ourselves the right and privilege not to deal with our fears because of the insurmountable nature of them, we are held hostage to a fictional creation that only has a hold on us because we give it permission to have a hold on us. And when these types of fear are multiplied, we lives imprisoned by small fears that we have granted gigantic status.

Badges and Battle Scars

Sometimes we need to tell war stories. We need to talk about the stuff of life that ravaged us or sent us to the edge of some perilous cliff that we heroically fought back from. Our lives don't seem to measure up to the lives and stories of those around us; the tall tales that appear to make people larger than they are.

And so monsters can take the little scrapes and scratches of life and make them larger than life. They give us a story to tell that stands toe-to-toe with the stories of everyone else. Monsters take the mediocre and make it miraculous, the minor and make it magnificent. We can puff up our chests and stand tall with wounds that extol our identity as survivors victorious in the most heinous battles that can be imagined.

The problem however is two-fold. First, it's all a lie and it speaks nothing of our valor other than we see ourselves as weak and needing to be puffed up. Second, in time we come to believe some aspect of those monsters. What we used to make ourselves larger than we are becomes the very thing that makes us feel inadequate in life. It all backfires and we pay the price.

Just Plain Fear

Other times we make monsters out of things because others tell us that these fears are bigger than what they really are. Sometimes it's really no fault of our own. Others have exaggerated our fears for us, or they've exaggerated their own fears and pass that on to us. Yet others want to avoid their own fears so they exaggerate ours in order to give themselves permission to put theirs aside as a way to avoid their own stuff. Finally, our own fatigue, whether that's physical or emotional fatigue or something else can rob us of our ability to see things correctly. It can also put us in such a diminished state that things simply look bigger.

What to Do

The best thing is to talk to someone who's separate from your situation. Get an objective perspective. Second, talk to someone who's gone through what you're going through. They'll be able to give you a perspective of someone who's on the other end of what you're going through. Finally, seek professional help if these monsters become debilitating. A professional can help you achieve a greater balance and more effectively deal with these life issues. Whatever you do, do something so that you control your life rather than the monsters that stand around you.