

[Note: my first career was ecological-environmental, second was education, third was human services and rehabilitation care work; this book ms. (unpublished<sup>1</sup>) was written in mid-to-late 1990s, the first one I began in this third career – rmf (April 15, 2019)]

*Journey Into Fearlessness: Towards a Meta-Service Healing Model*

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**PREFACE**

*True fearlessness is not the reduction of fear, but going beyond it. -Chöygam Trungpa*

Last year my intimate partner<sup>2</sup> and I slipped lovingly across the abyss into the arms of the dark unconscious sea.

With one foot still on the dock and the other well into the boat, we were swept into the hot breath of the ‘green dragon.’ We came to a “life-jolting” discovery, as John Bradshaw (1988:vii) called it, that the core “demon” was not outside of ourselves but breathing hotly within. We named it “fear.”

We had discovered authentic intimacy and in the same moment the terror of abandonment.

The oppression of our past history and culture was revealed brightly only to haunt us in the present. Naming the best ‘fear’ freed us long enough from its deathly grip to see that it was the core dragon behind all forms of terrorism, massive social and environmental destruction and the loss of faith in Love and [p. 1] goodness over evil. We so clearly witnessed the death-making

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<sup>1</sup> Some 19pp typed (double-spaced), and 40 pp hand-written, the rest is notes, quotes and references mixed.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine V. Sannuto, co-founder of In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989- ), Calgary, AB, Canada.

addictions of our modern civilization as flames burning endlessly in a conflagration of fear. The world and our grief were seemingly overwhelming.

We still remain adrift in what seems like uncharted waters. The voyage was sudden and we felt caught without time to prepare. There seemed to be no readily available guiding maps. Quickly we realized we had not been taught most of the navigational skills essential to healing and living and loving beyond fear. We knew that ultimately we were on a healing journey into fearlessness. This was the same mythic journey as the quest for Love, for God, for Goodness, for the Source, for Oneness, for Communion, for the Holy Grail and Eternal Life. We sensed our relationship could only remain centered in Love if we were able to think and act outside of our feelings and thoughts of fear.

In naming ‘fear,’ we understood for the first time the possibility of a life, a relationship and world beyond fear. We knew fear was not bad in itself. It was just a feeling, which Gabrielle Roth (1989:66) says, “... is a vitally useful emotion. It places you on the alert, catalyzes your senses, and heightens your awareness in the face of danger.” Fear is a normal human emotion for survival and well being.

What we learned was that fear as a healthy human emotion [p. 2] can be transformed into a toxic and paralyzing state of being. The reaction of a person coming from a fear-based position was always exaggerated and dramatic but ineffective and inflexible in dealing with the actual present time reality. Their ineffectiveness frightened them even more. They then acted “crazy” out of total feelings of inadequacy, helplessness and desperation. There was wisdom in F. D. Roosevelt’s famous declaration that “All we have to fear is fear itself.” Toxic fear is the fear of fear and that becomes terror. Nicholas Berdyaev wrote, “The greatest sin of the age is to make

the concrete abstract” and fear of fear is created “abstractly in the *mind*” (cited in Dass & Gorman 1987:61).

When the individual is overwhelmed with feelings of fear they take on a fear-based identity. They believe in the midst of the panic reaction that they are the fear. The whole self and world around them becomes frightening. This leads to a generalized state of paranoia and on a larger scale leads to the destructive pattern of “consensual paranoia” (Keen, 1983) which becomes the social norm of the modern industrial state. This is the “hell” where enemy-making, war and nuclear weaponry are created. This is the place where humans are dehumanized and treat each other inhumanly. When fear is taken on as one’s identity and state of Reality, then it is highly toxic and polluting to all life and creative processes.

We learned that the ego is built upon a fear-based structure in the modern industrial and patriarchal culture. [p. 3] Egoism is fearism. The ego is based on the ‘habit of fear’ and we are reluctant (terrified) to let go of our addiction to toxic fear-based thinking.

We both began to ask ourselves how could we work in human services as caregivers/ counsellors if we were living our lives controlled by our ego and its fear-based thinking? We saw a lot of destructiveness for caregivers and helping professionals in human services. We knew the drain that this work put on us and how it reduced the quality of service we were able to give. There was a need for new models of service that would benefit all of us—the staff and clients. This book is the outcome of that search.

The so called “crazy” clients we saw while working professionally in the field of human services made it clear that they were often “living” out of painful unhealed memories and past fears. Their pattern of behavior and thinking was often clouded while the feelings of fear were ruling. They made lousy decisions in this state (as do human service staff and administrators) and

only seemed to further the syndrome of self-destruction and oppression. Toxic fear was the core of the irrational destructive behavior we saw in our own intimate relationship as well. We continued to hurt each other when we let fear rule our decisions. It seemed an even more painful realization that we did this in the name of loving each other. “Love is not enough” said Bruno Bettelheim (1950). [p. 4]

We knew we needed to understand the history and dynamics of fear and fear-based thinking. We wanted to know more about the path of fearlessness as a way to grow from a Love-base not a fear-base. We sensed we could apply this knowledge to human services equally well because it is all about human relationships and Love... what we later called a compassion-centered healing model for human services. Gerald Jampolsky’s (1985) dictum: “Love is letting go of fear”, and Scott Peck’s (1978) “Love is a decision”, really hit home to us. I felt I had finally found the answer to the long plaguing question I have had since as early as I can remember: Why do people who say they love and care for me, hurt me? I now realized they were not bad. They were hurt and afraid. They were too afraid to name the ‘fear’ and too afraid to make the decision to live and love beyond fear. They were not supported to be fearless. They were only supported to deny their feelings and fear.

Our culture is not a healing culture. It taught us to cope. A mentor of mine defined coping as “learned discouragement.” We have all been trained and “educated” in a fear-based culture and world view. It is a culture that taught us to buy more material things to fill the unfillable hole in our hearts. Compassion has been “exiled” (Fox, 1979) and we all feel alone and afraid inside. This realization of the core demon of ‘fear’ and woundedness was the birth of compassion in me. My entire picture of the world and my [p. 5] relationship to myself and others changed dramatically. I was learning about mercy and forgiveness for the first time. I felt a deep healing

within as my heart began to open. It was very painful and terrifying but the times of true joy and Love that were unleashed convinced me that we can experience more of what we truly desire and search for. I was beginning to feel human again.

We quickly learned about disappointment. We felt its depths like never before. We thought people would be ecstatic about the insights we had gained and the thought that there is hope beyond the fear-based mess we all are in. No, there was primarily rejection and anger projected out at us. We had underestimated the “power” of the fear-based ego. We learned that it will sacrifice anyone and anything in its way to remain hidden and in place. It is like a wounded animal that has been cornered... unpredictable and deadly. All such reaction is primitive and based upon the feeling that the ego is trapped in a kill or be killed position. It is hard for the ego to reach out and open up for support under that mentality. The fear-based false self continues its ugly and beastly existence in a world of terror.

But disappointment turned out to be valuable to us and an essential component of the journey into fearlessness. Trungpa (1973:25) wrote, “We must surrender our hopes and expectations, as well as our fears, and march directly into [p. 6] disappointment, go into it and make it our way of life.... Disappointment is a good sign of basic intelligence.” Our work in human services has taught us that disappointment is common amongst all involved. The problems just seemed overwhelming. We would cope by shutting down our hearts and not feeling the pain. But in this denial we became cold and numb.

But every once in a while my intimate partner and I could break out beyond that ugliness and numbness of fear. Our authentic self would emerge and radiate with beauty and we could believe in Love and goodness once more. But it was a lot of hard work. We would quickly revert back to fear when we feared getting too close. Love hurts. Healing hurts too and it doesn't take

away pain. What we and others needed were good opportunities to authentically suffer and grieve.

We thought we could devise a way in which people in human services could benefit from healing and living beyond fear. Human service organizations and agencies could potentially become non-oppressive and support healthy growth of individuals as helpers and helpees. They could base their work on a compassion-centered healing model instead of a management maintenance and coping model. We knew we had to get to the core demon behind the problems and quit focusing only on symptoms. The dis-ease of our culture is toxic ‘fear.’

As I thought more about human service workers I felt [p. 7] able to describe the developmental stages that exist or could exist, as an individual or agency grows from caring to compassion. Human services today are stuck. People are stuck and “burn out” and consumption of funds is catching up to our society. We are losing services for the disadvantaged groups rather than gaining. There is no other course when the deficit of the nation grows so large. Health and care are costly in many ways. Could a meta-service model of healing improve the quality of experience and life for everyone? Well at least it is designed not just for clients but those that want to help and serve. I sensed we better start acknowledging we are all wounded first. Then compassion could begin to recover its long exile in the West. Community based on compassion is the only long term solution to the nightmare of health, environmental and social problems that exist in our world today. People supporting and healing is the basis of a healthy and sustainable culture.

Toxic fear is not about to lay down and be wiped out or cleaned up by good willing people. It is cunning, confusing, powerful and nasty. It is embedded in all parts of our socialized self and system structures. Any attempt to unveil its supremacy and corruption (lie) will be seen

as a threat to the *status quo*. This makes implementation of such a model difficult, to say the least. We will need good theory and appropriate models based on the healing experience and a depth understanding of the fear-based ego and dynamics of [p. 8] fear[ism]. This model presented here is an attempt to begin a logical unraveling of that which has remained in a lot of confusion for a long time.

The time has now come when more and more people recognize how they are being ruled by fear and playing roles that they can no longer play. We all want so much more. We want compassion back again.

This book is composed of four parts: Part I: puts the human service field into a new context as a healing journey and choice for those involved, and puts the work within the context of oppression; Part II: looks at the history, dynamics and many disguises of fear so we can understand and name it as a reaction and identity formation process based on a wounded self; Part III: offers many ways to begin to expose, unravel and heal the paralyzing effects of toxic fear-based thinking and transforming it to more creative energy and soul-making endeavors, attention will be given to the wisdom literature and experience of the journey into fearlessness; Part IV: will develop the meta-service healing model and the developmental stages of relationship which include: 1) caring, 2) helping, 3) service, and 4) compassion. Practical suggestions for implementation in many human service settings will conclude the book.

This is a book of hope beyond hope. The message has the [p. 9] potential to break apart the “consensual paranoia” of the modern world and liberate the soul to choose and direct once again a life beyond fear. This freedom of choice beyond toxic fear will be a scary journey. “Freedom is terror,” according to J. P. Sartre. I know it is worth it because no longer am I a

prisoner to myself following like a victim the sad but true statement, "... we often prefer a bad certainty to a good uncertainty" (Nouwen 1986:71).

I have learned much from fairy tales and mythology. It is universal in the stories of heroes and heroines that what at first seems to be only an enemy, like a green dragon, if befriended and understood, can become our wisdom guide. Bertrand Russell (cited in Segal 1984:95) said, "To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom." Let the journey begin!

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