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From Fear to Action Research, to Enhanced Activism Using R. Michael Fisher's "Fearlessness" Research

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*This secrecy affects my honesty in communicating
with myself and others.*

An exploration of *fear and fearlessness* is a new adventure for me in my retirement. Throughout some events in my life, I've felt fear. Fear feels like paralysis due to a perceived threat or negative consequences from actions. It often stops me from taking action.

Telling myself I've lost interest in an issue is a lie because had there been no fear, then I would have taken an action that would have moved my life in a different path. Fear also affects my transparency to myself and others. Telling myself and others, the lie that I've lost interest is also participating in the phenomenon of secrecy. This secrecy affects my honesty in communicating with myself and others.

It was when reading R. Michael Fisher's book, *Fearless Engagement of Four Arrows: The True Story of an Indigenous-Based Social Transformer* (2018), that I realized fear is a most important phenomenon affecting a person's life. I took a challenge offered in the "Study Questions and Practice" section of the book on page, 117, #3. I asked several people "(a) How do you define fear?" Answers were as follows: "Being afraid of repercussions, of certain actions, statements and discussions"; "Fear is something you are afraid to face"; "Fear is a lack of self-confidence. Fear is a lack of faith that God is working with you"; "Getting stuck. Ignoring or avoiding the truth and not wanting to change"; "Fear is a feeling of being threatened by possible negative consequences if an action is taken or even if there is an upcoming conversation, or an answer given to a question. Fear can also be present during discussions if one's ideas are very different from those listening to these views."

Upon reflection and in agreement with Dr. Fisher, fear is an emotion most of us know very little about. Perhaps, we know more about driving a car than a phenomenon deeply entrenched within us -- Fear. It is an intimate, powerful part of the self.

In the past, using intuition along with rational thought guided my actions. This strategy worked for many years especially after learning about intuition and completing my Master of Education thesis on the subject. It was after I retired and pursued environmentally-based interests as an advocate/activist that I felt my intuition alone was inadequate.

I live in the Lake Simcoe Watershed area, Ontario. For years, environmentalists in this area have worked very hard to speak up in favor of keeping our lake in good quality condition and our natural forests intact. For years also, there have been stresses on the lake; waste from farming, from urban centers, and from phosphorous pollution. Forests, including wetlands and fields have been threatened with over development consisting of buildings and infrastructure which I call "cement centers." Environmental advocates have been successful on occasion. We recently won a legal victory in favor of saving a significant portion of the North Gwillimbury Forest from development. Over ninety percent of this forest will remain intact.

I continue to volunteer with them but there is something else I'd like to learn.

I am not against development. I wish developers and those using Nature's gifts or resources would listen more and follow the advice of those supporting our natural heritage. To achieve this, it would be helpful to have environmental groups and residents involved in the planning process, within the planning department of municipalities. Also, municipal planning departments could hire recent graduates with experience and degrees/diplomas in sustainable urban planning, who also have degrees/diplomas in environmental protection or conservation. In my municipality, there are hopeful signs recently established which I will explain later in this article.

It is crucial to emphasize that the advocacy and activism of environmental groups here already have been recognized by our municipal decision-makers. They are having a positive effect on local decisions. Probably the media and public attention to climate change is having an impact on the attitudes of our municipal officials.

As a volunteer, I've learned a great deal helping environmentalists, who have environmental degrees and years of conservation experience. I continue to volunteer with them but there is something else I'd like to learn. I would like to be able to motivate others to join us. This is a challenge as I don't have the skills to attract more conservation advocates. There is also the fear that I won't be able to motivate others despite my efforts. Other fears are that an action I take or something I say may jeopardize the successful work others with more experience have accomplished.

As someone who highly prizes personal intuition to guide one's life, I was stopped by these fears. Months ago, I sought guidance from my intuition to lead me towards the best way to learn how to conquer these fears. My questions for intuitive guidance was, " How can I learn to conquer my fear of recruiting environmental advocates to protect the Lake

Simcoe Watershed areas in ways that honor the hardworking environmentalists already here?"

It is the fear that initiates the process and progresses towards fearlessness.

Time passed without any insights. While looking in the library and on-line for help, I found the title *Fearless Engagement of Four Arrows: The True Story of an Indigenous -Based Social Transformer*, by R. Michael Fisher. This book, available on-line, appealed to me because of the words "fearless" and "Four Arrows." In the past while working as teacher, I used the book authored by Four Arrows, *Teaching Truly: A Curriculum to Indigenize Mainstream Education* (2013). I thought Fisher's book could enable me to deal with fear and move towards fearlessness.

Despite the success of intuition, which led me to Michael Fisher's work, fear continued to stop me. It showed me the dark shadow surrounding a monolith of formidable skyscrapers, i.e. the destruction of our beautiful natural heritage, replaced by big, polluted cement centers along with a toxic lake. According to Fisher's work, fear, courage and fearlessness are related because it is the fear that initiates the process and progresses towards *fearlessness*. A comparison between *intuition* and the Fear/Fearlessness partnership shows that fear will overcome intuition for a while. The person experiencing fear can no longer proceed using his or her traditional intuitive guidance system. In my case, the issue was fear of failure in not attracting more people to join environmental advocacy and regret, resulting from making statements or taking actions that contradict the work of very experienced and highly educated environmentalists in my area.

According to Mona Lisa Schulz, M.D., PhD and psychiatrists who wrote the book *Awakening Intuition: Using Your Mind-Body Network for Insight and Healing* (1998), physiologically, intuition facing fear will react this way:

[A]nxiety, panic, and horror are shades of fear. Throughout our lives and at various stages, depending on what is happening with us, we all feel these emotions. Emotions, and the memories that embody them, speak to us as elements of the intuition network, intuitive guidance signals that tell us whether we're heading in the right direction or the wrong direction for our happiness and health....When an emotion feels good, we know we're on the right course. Feelings like joy and love are your internal cheering sections. They tell you you're succeeding at something, you're on the happy track, and you should keep going the way you're going....Emotions that feel bad are telling us we're off course. The same is true for fear, which is a strong intuitive guiding signal telling you you're in a new and potentially treacherous situation, to watch yourself, be careful. (Schulz, pp.219-20).

What about a situation when fear is present but the individual still has an urge to proceed with the motivation to pursue an interest or cause?

People who are not aware of how intuition works will miss the answer...

In the book, *Practical intuition: How to Harness the Power of Your Instinct and Make it work for You*, author Laura Day states, "intuition must be "set in motion" by a question. The question focuses your intuition and tells you what you need to notice in the world around you" (Day, 1996, p. 87). In the mind of the person, she explains, intuitive information is "delivered in a melange of symbol, sound, and feeling that then has to be interpreted and integrated by the rational conscious mind" (p. 118). In my experiences, using Day's research, it is important that after the question is asked, the observer needs:

...to notice that answers can come in pieces over time. The answers can come in the form of images of people, things, animals, places, insights in the form of short sentences, dreams, colors, shapes, feelings and symbols that occur in the mind and relate back to the question posed. (Legree, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Other ways of experiencing intuition related to a question are by "receiving things, information, and by closely observing the context or events happening around the observer" (Legree, p.4). Furthermore,

The person asking the question does not know how the answer will be given, but if the person is aware of how intuition works, this person will see that an answer to a question has been given. People who are not aware of how intuition works will miss the answer because they don't know they are being given an answer. (Legree, 2009, p.4)

Intuition has stopped me due to fear. There did not seem to be another path for me to follow. This time, however, instead of disengaging from the situation that brought the fear, I chose to seek answers about fear and courage. That's where I particularly found Fisher's book relevant.

In *Fearless Engagement of Four Arrows*, Fisher invites us to learn how to deal with fear by applying the teachings of Indigenous-based social transformer and education and leadership professor Four Arrows (aka Dr. Don Trent Jacobs). Four Arrows is also a life-time environmental activist. While he was kayaking in treacherous waters in remote Mexico decades ago, Four Arrows narrowly escaped death and in the process had a near-death experience. He studied this experience under mentoring of 104 yr-old Indigenous shaman-leader Augustin Ramos.

Four Arrows, very athletic, who served as a fire-fighter and U.S. Marine was accustomed to taking risks, even dangerous athletic risks. But his near-death experience gave him new transformative insights about fear, courage and fearlessness, knowledge he could share with others. After the near-death experience, Four Arrows in a trance state saw the acronym CAT-FAWN. The dream-vision showed a large feline (puma) and a fawn (deer). What captured his curiosity even more strongly was that in his waking life, he had seen that particular feline and that fawn days before.

CAT-FAWN became the acronym for this unique method of teaching others how to deal with fear, overcome it, and move, more or less, into a state of fearlessness. For those who wish to be able to deal effectively with fear, this was a watershed event of deep understanding, because for many of us, especially in the modern W. world, we know little about fear and therefore ways to overcome it.

Meditation is a powerful guide in using intuition.

In his research, Four Arrows explains, the benefits of CAT-FAWN and trance-based learning (TBL). "Fear and courage concepts are essential to understand as they drive learning and development in a "good way" or "bad way" (quoted in Fisher, 2018, p.2). The "bad way" for me would have been to succumb to fear and abandon my wish to overcome it. The "good way," the path I chose, is to learn about fear, courage and fearlessness.

In CAT-FAWN, CAT refers to "Concentration Activated Transformation-- meaning there is an altered state of consciousness (and/or TBL potential) emerging, often caused by Fear (including alertness and/or shock). However, there are many other forms of concentration practices such as intense arts, sports, exercising, yoga, ritual and meditation that can bring this state-change of consciousness, focus and alertness." (Fisher, p.6). Four Arrows further adds, "In CAT, our senses and creative imagination (e.g., right-brain hemisphere) are activated" (quoted in Fisher, p.6).

For me, it was meditation on a statement in another part of Fisher's book in which Augustin Ramos advises Four Arrows, "Tell them to concentrate quietly in a place where the energy is not sick. Then they will be awed at how they are related to all that they see and feel." (quoted in Fisher, p. 140).

For me, meditation is a powerful guide in using intuition. Part of my practices then involved entering this quiet place and time. I felt a trust that I will be able to overcome my fear and capture the spirit of adventure. I felt confident that I could proceed with my wishes. As Four Arrows further explains, I could see/imagine myself in "fearless pursuit" in regard to describing the magical and successful synchronicities and happenings" (quoted in Fisher, p. 90). Synchronicities and happenings are hallmarks of the intuition network. In reflecting back on my question, I realized I was being given the answer. I had the tools within CAT-FAWN. I needed to understand how to use this tool. There were more synchronicities and happenings that would soon occur.

It is very helpful to read Fisher's book in its entirety but one can see the outline of CAT-FAWN in the Appendix (p.299). In the CAT-FAWN partnership, the FAWN, **F** means Fear, **A** means Authority, **W** means Word, **N** means Nature. Using CAT-FAWN, in a good way, means *Fear* activates the attention and motivation to learn. *Authority* is designated by the observer, and in my case it is CAT-FAWN induced intuition and synchronicities that are meaningful to me. I am the authority over myself. I may reflect on other authorities in my life and how they either helped or disabled me. The Words used in past or in the present are the teaching tools I choose to use. They Worlds have power, so use them

wisely. Nature - I am taking these actions in support of Nature and those who support Nature. Using FAWN, the observer proceeds to initiate thoughts that follow the virtues of reason, mindfulness, patience, courageousness, truth and love. Notice the emphasis on education and learning. The actions are based on courage, self-realization and freedom to pursue a new path or adventure. When used in a bad way, CAT-FAWN, like unconscious hypnosis leads to the opposite of the virtues and negative actions—ultimately, fear-based reality. In this way, the observer pursues fear, not even aware they've activated a very pessimistic transformation. They succumb to irrationality, mindlessness, cowardice, self-estrangement, which leads to hate, deceit, injustice and oppression engendered by their fears (Fisher, p. 299).

As I was reading Fisher's book, two significant and related synchronicities occurred. One was an email I received from an on-line magazine called "Kindling I Good News for Humankind". This magazine reports good news globally about ways in which people are taking action to improve social justice and helping our natural environment through compassionate works and ideas. Since recently, the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance won a legal issue, this was great news. I asked the editor of Kindling magazine if he would consider printing this good news. After email discussions, I sent him a link to this report which was printed in a local newspaper called *Georgina Post*. I was elated when I read our good news about the North Gwillimbury Forest in the Kindling on-line magazine.

On another occasion, I received an email from an organization called the Pachamama Alliance. This is an alliance of Indigenous leaders and their supporters who offer information about forests in South America. They also offer free on-line courses on ways in which to become agents of change for Indigenous people and forests. The wonderful teachings about the Indigenous worldview, invite us to imagine a world abundant in beautiful, natural landscapes, clean water, happy humans and wildlife. I joined this group and I'm taking their courses. This alliance offers ways to connect with others around the world for discussions on the course materials, and ideas for taking actions in support of Indigenous people, forests in South America, and in our own areas. This has become a way for me to learn how to attract others to join in conservation efforts in my area. Among the lessons, there are teachings about the Indigenous worldview through videos and transcripts by Indigenous leader from Peru named Arkan Lushwala. Some of his presentations can be viewed on Youtube by using his name. Arkan Lushwala offers us the wisdom of Indigenous teachings - a worldview intimately connected with Pachamama, or Earth Mother. He has books available as well.

The adventure in fearlessness has started in a basic manner for me. Since I have the book by Michael Fisher I can refer to it perpetually when needed. In my local area, I've participated in meditation sessions with a meditation coach. Since completing these sessions most days, my meditation practices are strong, but some days they are weak. The lack of motivation is expressed in not being able to complete a meditation, in having too many scattered thoughts and a lack of self-confidence. At times, recalling news about a dire situation in the world will cause a feeling of hopelessness and I'm overwhelmed. On good days, I'm successful in following my process to achieve self-confidence, focus and optimism. The routine is to find a quiet place in my home. Once the spring/ summer

weather here, I will go outside. For now, in my home, I sit or lie quietly and imagine myself in a peaceful, beautiful natural area.

I'm walking over a hill. On the other side is a pond surrounded by lovely trees, wildflowers, and reeds in the pond. I notice the sky is blue with some clouds, and it is warm.

My meditative imagination spontaneously turns into transformation.

I change into a leaf, feather, or retain my present form. I feel the breeze on the pond and the waters rippling into waves. There are raindrops on me. Then I sink into the water and notice fish near me. I gently sink deeper into the pond and notice the water and view above me of that same area through the water. I notice the stillness, darkness and the absence of fish I saw moments before when I was at a higher level in the pond. Finally, I sink to the bottom of the pond. It's dark, still and peaceful. Here there are no intruding thoughts about the day's tasks any more. In this condition, other images emerge that are not related to my daily life. Sometimes I see the beautiful, mysterious head of a very large black feline, a panther and I focus on those awesome eyes. Other times, there are images of other nature based images. When this meditation is successful, I reach a feeling, attitude or even an awareness that is focused, self-confident and optimistic ! My emotions are stable. While in the pond with these positive emotions, an image presents itself as a bird flying to gain altitude. At a specific altitude, this bird glides easily, freely in a wide circular fashion, riding the wind.

This is a signal to me that I've reached the desired "space" in my meditation. At some point I open my eyes and enjoy this confident, energized feeling. I'm able to pursue at least one environmentally related goal for this day. This meditation is personal. Others likely will have a different experience that works for them. For me, when all the images and events culminate in a feeling of self-confidence, stable emotions and joy, I know I've reached a condition in which I can focus well on an environmentally related task. Both, the meditation sessions and the courses within the Pachamama Alliance are helpful.

An important part of my advocacy includes being involved in Survival International, an organization devoted to helping Indigenous peoples worldwide to stop the mining, logging, and palm oil companies from theft and destruction of Indigenous lands. The Indigenous families are often abused, subject to terrible violence, the burning of their villages and other atrocities. The movie by Leonardo Dicaprio called "Before the Flood" is about palm-oil and Indigenous people, natural forests and the suffering of animals as well. My goal is to raise awareness and next month I am giving a presentation about palm-oil, the dire effects on Indigenous people living in those areas along with the suffering of animals and destruction of natural spaces there. Survival International provides videos of Indigenous people telling their stories and a translation into English. Products on the market containing palm-oil have an alternative with no palm-oil. This will be part of my presentation.

Locally, we've had very positive developments from our municipal government. Our mayor and a senior planner have invited local groups and residents to participate in the present and future planning of our environment during this period of anticipated population growth in our area. There are processes in place to invite groups and residents to participate in planning meetings. I've been invited by our mayor to participate in this process and local environmental groups have asked me to attract people to attend these meetings.

At the outset of this article, I described my fears and my desires to motivate others to join local environmental groups with outreach efforts to participate in keeping our natural heritage spaces intact and the lake in good quality condition. The efforts to overcome my fears through using the therapy work and the research of Michael Fisher are succeeding. My knowledge of intuition has been enhanced through the fear/fearlessness partnership and CAT-FAWN. I invite the reader to take this adventure from fear to courage to fearlessness. For me this exciting adventure continues.

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