

WEEK 8

KEY LEARNINGS

"The best way to gain self-confidence is to do what you are afraid of." — Swati Sharma

Here are some of the key learnings of week 8:

Fear and confidence: Contrary to common belief, confidence isn't about being fearless – it's about being courageous. It's about facing our fears head-on, even if we don't feel ready yet. In Brené Brown's words: "It's not fear that gets in the way of showing up - it's armor. It's the behaviors we use to self-protect". Luckily, she has also taught us that "we can be afraid and brave at the same time". By embracing fear rather than avoiding it, we build resilience and deepen our sense of capability and self-trust.

Fear and avoidance: Fear itself isn't the problem; it's how we respond to it - often through avoidance. This behavior, though natural, can hinder personal growth and sustain fear because it remains unaddressed. Recognizing our avoidance patterns is crucial for breaking free from their long-term negative impacts. Eventually, the only way to decrease fear's grip on us is to confront it directly, step by step, gradually diminishing its power.

Types and consequences of avoidance: Avoidance shows up in many forms, from procrastination to perfectionism, impacting our personal and professional lives. It tends to offer temporary relief or comfort, but usually leads to missed opportunities, increased stress, or strained relationships in the long run. That's because by numbing our emotions or escaping challenges, we deny ourselves the chance to learn and develop resilience.

This week's exercise to foster self-actualization:

- **7-day fear challenge:** *The challenge involves identifying specific fears that you've been avoiding and committing to confront one fear each day for seven days. By facing these fears head-on, you'll cultivate courage, build resilience, and increase your authentic confidence.*

SELF-ACTUALIZATION

7-DAY FEAR CHALLENGE

“Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is fear walking.” — Brené Brown

In this challenge, you'll identify the fears you've been avoiding and choose specific strategies to confront them over the next seven days. This will empower you to change your relationship with fear, strengthen your authentic confidence muscle, and help you overcome avoidance behaviors.

As you embark on this journey, embrace the discomfort and uncertainty, knowing that each small step forward is a victory in itself!

1. Identify your fears

To start, take a moment to sit down with your journal and be honest with yourself about your fears. Consider the five categories below (with examples) and note which of these (or other fears) you identify in yourself.

Fear of rejection, criticism, and embarrassment,

- *Fear of sharing your creative work online*
- *Fear of asking someone out on a date*
- *Fear of speaking up in group settings*

Fear of failure, inadequacy, and imperfection

- *Fear of starting a new project or pursuing a goal*
- *Fear of applying for a job or promotion or competition*
- *Fear of making mistakes (e.g., during a presentation)*

Fear of pain, discomfort, and disgust

- *Fear of going to the doctor for a check-up/procedure*
- *Fear of confronting a difficult conversation*
- *Fear of exercising or engaging in physical activity*

Fear of uncertainty, change, and loss of control

- *Fear of making life decisions (e.g., changing careers)*
- *Fear of trying new activities or experiences*
- *Fear of delegating tasks or responsibilities*

Fear of loneliness, loss, and isolation

- *Fear of ending a relationship or friendship*
- *Fear of expressing your needs or boundaries*
- *Fear of attending social events or gatherings*

2. Identify avoidance behaviors

Now that you've reflected on some of your fears, it's time to get curious about your unique ways of avoiding these fears. To do so, simply read through the list below and mark any behaviors that seem familiar.

Examples of avoidance behaviors:

- Remaining in unhealthy relationships or friendships
- Tolerating mistreatment or disrespect
- Avoiding conflict or confrontation in relationships
- Suppressing emotions or needs
- Declining invitations to social events
- Making up excuses to avoid attending certain events
- Avoiding making decisions altogether
- Seeking reassurance from others excessively
- Staying in familiar but unfulfilling situations
- Only sticking to familiar routines and environments
- Avoiding unfamiliar situations and challenges
- Walking on eggshells when interacting with others
- Hoarding tasks or responsibilities instead of delegating
- Micromanaging others' work or behaviors
- Procrastinating on taking action
- Not sharing anything until it's "perfect"
- Constantly surrounding oneself with others and avoiding alone-time
- Constantly trying to please others
- Finding excuses to delay starting a project
- Focusing excessively on potential obstacles or challenges
- Ruminating or worrying rather than taking effective action
- Avoiding job applications or interviews
- Downplaying your skills and achievements (e.g., in your resume)
- Seeking out positions below your skill level
- Primarily dating people who are "below your league"
- Avoiding situations where mistakes might happen
- Numbing uncomfortable emotions with drugs, food, TV, work, etc.
- Being overly perfectionistic (e.g., over-rehearsing or over-preparing)
- Withdrawing from activities or responsibilities that seem challenging
- Not scheduling necessary (doctor's) appointments
- Making excuses to skip workouts or physical activities
- Pretending that everything is fine when it isn't
- Changing the subject when sensitive topics come up
- Remaining silent during discussions even when you have valuable input
- Not publishing or sharing your work
- Deleting posts or comments that receive any criticism
- Avoiding discussions about your creative projects

Which (other) avoidance behaviors do you recognize in yourself?

3. Reflect on your avoidance behaviors

The tricky thing about avoidance behaviors is that they tend to provide short-term relief but also have long-term negative consequences. For example, doom-scrolling might numb uncomfortable feelings in the moment, but can lead to increased anxiety over time. Similarly, people-pleasing might help us avoid social conflict in the moment but often results in a loss of personal boundaries, resentment, and lack of intimacy.

To explore how your own avoidance behaviors impact your life, refer to your list from step 2 and consider the following questions:

In what ways do you benefit from your avoidance behaviors?

- *For example, how might they protect or comfort you in the moment?*

In what ways do your avoidance behaviors harm you or hold you back?

- For example, how might they lead to stagnation or missed opportunities for personal or professional growth?
- How might they negatively impact your relationships and well-being in the long term?
- How might they increase stress or anxiety over time?

As you consider both the pleasant and unpleasant consequences of your avoidance behaviors, ask yourself: Do they ultimately help or hurt me?

4. Design your 7-day challenge

Now, pick up to seven specific fears from your list (ideally those with the most negative consequences from avoiding them) and design your 7-day fear challenge. It's up to you how many fears you want to confront during the upcoming week and how intensely you want to confront them.

Day 1: Which fear will you confront?

How will you confront it?

How will you benefit from confronting this fear?

Day 2: Which fear will you confront?

How will you confront it?

How will you benefit from confronting this fear?

Day 3: Which fear will you confront?

How will you confront it?

How will you benefit from confronting this fear?

Day 4: Which fear will you confront?

How will you confront it?

How will you benefit from confronting this fear?

Day 5: Which fear will you confront?

How will you confront it?

How will you benefit from confronting this fear?

Day 6: Which fear will you confront?

How will you confront it?

How will you benefit from confronting this fear?

Day 7: Which fear will you confront?

How will you confront it?

How will you benefit from confronting this fear?

5. Document your progress and reflect on your growth

At the end of each day, briefly journal about your experience confronting one of your fears. Note any insights, emotions, or observations that arise during the process. Celebrate your victories, no matter how small, and acknowledge any challenges you face along the way.

At the end of the challenge, take some time to reflect on your journey.

- *How has confronting your fears impacted your confidence, resilience, and overall well-being?*

- *What went well, what progress are you proud of, and where do you still see areas of further growth?*

Remember, the goal of this challenge is not to eliminate fear but to change your relationship with it. Embrace the discomfort and uncertainty, knowing that each step you take towards confronting your fears brings you closer to living a more courageous and authentic life.