



FEAR AND SAFETY

**THE NEUROTHEOLOGY OF
SURVIVAL**

BY: DR. JEROME D. LUBBE



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INTRODUCTION



Bears and Deadlines





Imagine with me. You're sitting around a campfire in the marshlands of the Canadian wilderness. Your river rafting adventure has taken you downstream into the western frontier. Besides your three friends, the only sign of life you've seen since the day you left is the not-so-recently used firepit you came upon at a small clearing. The stars and the glow of the flames from the fire you made now serve as your lamp, while the orange light from the sun fades into the dark blues of night.

Your stomach emits a low growl, reminding you that it's been over two hours since dinner. A snack would be ideal, but your food has been tied up in a bear hang a quarter mile up the trail. This is Grizzly territory; leaving food in your camp after dark is asking for an unwelcome visitor.

Your body shudders at the thought of a Grizzly barging in on your site while you sleep. The tales of near-death bear encounters (and a few deadly) told near the trailhead have not escaped your memory. It doesn't help that one of your companions has a love for campfire horror stories and tonight, has settled on one involving a grizz. "We should be safe here, though," you assure yourself as you recall the distance between you and the bear hang and vaguely recollect hearing that fire "keeps bears away". Eventually, the warmth of the fire and the stillness of the night are sufficient to settle your mind and allow you to doze off...until....

CRACK!!

In a split second, you're jolted from your stupor by a loud crashing sound coming from the forest. The sound is almost as if an entire tree had been toppled. One of your friends observes that the noise came from the direction of the bear hang. Your heart jumps into your throat. One of your companions insist on investigating, and everyone reluctantly



agrees despite your disapproval. Every part of your being resists you as you begin walking in the direction of the sound. Your pulse quickens and your breathing becomes shallow as you enter the small clearing on the opposite side of the bear hang. The entire red cedar that held your bear hang safely 20-feet off the ground is now a part of the forest floor. The contents are strewn around the base of the tree. The forest is eerily silent.

“Let’s get out of here...” someone mumbles, and the group slowly backs out of the clearing. A low whimper escapes your mouth as you turn towards the trail, glance up, and there, silhouetted by the moon, is the 700-pound Grizzly that toppled your bear hang and it’s sturdy tree.

“RUN!!!” you scream, just as the bear lunges towards you.

If you played this story out in your imagination, chances are your heart-rate may be a little higher, your body more tense, and your emotions more on-edge than before you started this eBook. Why? Because of fear.

Neuroscience tells us that our response to fear and stress is intricately connected to our everyday functions: breathing, digestion, heart rate, blood pressure, bowel and bladder function, perspiration, cognition, emotional sensitivity, and so much more. Our brain is designed to significantly modify, and at times even completely shut down, some of these functions in order to keep us alive when we are encountering something that threatens our survival. It is constantly asking itself the question, “Is this going to be life-giving?”

For example, go back to the scene when you are running from the bear. What do you think the chances are of you stopping for a bathroom break? Or, what are the chances you are going to stop and have a rational, calm discussion with your friends to plan the



best course of action? Not very high, right? Why? Because your brain knows that if you stop to use the bathroom, or if you stop to reason with your friends, you're going to get eaten.

Your brain is designed with one goal in mind: to keep you alive. It is incredibly efficient at this job and will do whatever it takes to make sure it happens, even if it means significantly modifying your normal body functions to allocate resources to other more important functions required for survival.

Now, if you're not someone who spends much time running from bears in the marshlands of the Canadian wilderness, why does this matter? How does your death-avoidant brain affect your modern life? The challenge of a finely-tuned fear response is that it doesn't discriminate. When you receive a stressful email, a conflict-ridden text, lose a job, or experience someone merging into your lane on the highway, your brain responds the same way it would as if a bear was chasing after you.

Rationally, we understand the stakes are not as high in these scenarios. They aren't life or death. So why would your brain have the same response as it would to a bear chasing you?

Because there is a powerful, primitive, hard-wired process attached to these deep, subconscious responses: fear.

I've been entrenched in the fields of neuroscience and functional neurology for more than eight years now as a practicing clinician and researcher, and I'm endlessly fascinated by new insights into how our brains work, specifically about how neuroscience ties into spirituality.



I started Thrive NeuroTheology because I wanted to generate conversations around how neuroscience and the brain relate to spirituality, and how we can translate these insights into practical application for self-care. There are many things I've learned about the basics of brain function and development, and I believe they lend themselves well towards new perspectives on theology and spirituality. I want to share a few of those lessons with you. The lessons have been captured in full-length conversations in my new online video course *The Neurotheology of Self-Care*. The goal of each topic I cover in the course is to give specific insights into:

1. How your brain works - in elegant, easy-to-understand models
2. How neuroscience ties in with spirituality, theology, health and the human experience
3. How this knowledge gives us practical applications for achieving self-care

In this eBook, we'll cover one of the most important topics discussed in *The Neurotheology of Self-Care* video course: Fear and Safety. This, simply put, is a conversation that affects every single human being on the planet. More specifically, it is a conversation that affects you.

*"Your brain doesn't know the difference
between a bear and a deadline."*

As we saw from the analogy of the bear, fear is not inherently a bad thing. In this case, fear is what kick-started the primitive systems in your brain that work, subconsciously and consciously, to keep you alive. The panic response, the shallow breathing, the quickened pulse, the heightened awareness, the tension in your body--these effects of fear are



designed to move you away from danger and towards safety. Your brain is literally hard-wired to respond with fear, because fear is what keeps you alive. So fear isn't always a bad thing. To an extent, it's actually necessary. You could even say, when implemented appropriately, it is "life-giving". From a neurological perspective, we can define fear as: "the body's initial, instinctive response to literally every stressor it will ever encounter, both subconsciously and consciously, in order to keep you alive."

In other words, **fear is the body's innate survival response.**

This fear response only becomes problematic when it is improperly applied to our experiences. Modern life is rapidly advancing, and our old systems haven't had time to work out all of the glitches. That's why your fear response kicks in when you're running late for work the same way it does when you're running from a bear. Your brain literally can't tell the difference between perception and reality. Your brain doesn't know the difference between a bear and a deadline.

Fear is a part of life. However, without regulation, it can get in the way of your being healthy, connected, and present. So how do we manage fear and stress so our brains are able to tell the difference between bears and deadlines? How do we learn to take intentional steps towards a more life-giving response?

By the end of this eBook, you will:

- Have a clear understanding of the nature of fear, our body's survival response.
- Possess insight into the neuroscience behind fear.



- Be introduced to specific spiritual concepts and conversations regarding fear and stress management.
- Come away with practical applications for self-care to help you manage fear and help your brain foster healthier responses.

The conversation around fear is not a simple one. It's a complex, ancient experience that literally dates to the origin of our brain development. There is no easy way or a "fix-all" solution, but my hope is that this eBook will lead you one step closer to a life of self-care and improved health.

Cheers,

Dr. Jerome D. Lubbe

PART ONE: THE NATURE OF FEAR



**Our Body's
Survival Response**





Every human being on the planet encounters fear as part of their daily reality. Safe to say, it is important to know how to manage it. Since there's a lot of fog around the concept of fear, let's spend this first section exploring the nature of fear.

Remember, from a neurological perspective, fear is the the body's initial, instinctive response to literally every stressor it will ever encounter, both subconsciously and consciously, in order to keep you alive.

In other words, **fear is the body's innate survival response.**

Let me show you what I mean.

When you are born, you are forced out of a safe, warm incubator called your mother's womb and immediately brought into a cold, weird, bright, hyper-stimulating, unfamiliar environment. Immediately you panic and cry because it's uncomfortable. It's scary. But here's the thing: your initial panic response, that fear, is actually what keeps you alive. You need a panic response in order to trigger a faster heartbeat and more rapid blood movement so your body can acclimate to a new environmental temperature. You need to be "triggered" in order for your lungs to inflate with oxygen for the very first time. You need these responses so your complex network of organ, hormone, sensory, and neurochemical systems--and so much more--come online to prepare you for the hard work of survival outside of the womb. **You need to experience a fearful response at birth so every subconscious, primitive, and instinctive system that keeps you alive can be kick-started.**

Let's go back again to the example of being chased by a bear. Imagine that somehow, a release of adrenaline allows you to move faster than you thought possible, and you've



managed to hide behind a tree off the main trail. Your heightened sense of hearing allows you to hear the crunch, crunch of leaves as the bear approaches your tree. As he nears, your breathing becomes shorter and shallower until it is barely audible. After a few minutes, he loses interest and walks off...and you manage to let out the breath you've been desperately holding.

"Fear is the body's innate survival response. It is not inherently evil or intrinsically negative. It's necessary to your survival."

What caused your body to react in such a way that your breathing became shallow, your senses more alert, and your movement faster than normal? Fear. Your fear of being eaten by the bear subconsciously triggered instinctive reactions designed to help you avoid being eaten. Fear is what helped you survive.

Again, **fear is not inherently evil or intrinsically negative. It's necessary to your survival.**

Fear is also critical to making successful life decisions. One of your brain's primary goals is to move you either towards pleasure or away from pain. Your brain instinctively attempts to make decisions that have a higher probability of helping you increase your chances of survival. Ultimately, your subconscious decision-making revolves around whether or not the choices you are making will move you into a place of safety and/or pleasure and away from danger and/or pain. It is important to understand these subconscious decisions are not initially based on rationale, intellect, complex intuition, or executive decision-making. They are first and foremost primitive instincts. As such, your subconscious brain will not



intentionally pursue a future if it looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels the same as your present or your past when your present or past has been traumatic. Your current, present-tense decisions are based on a lifetime of experiences, both positive and negative, that your brain analyzes, subconsciously and consciously, to tell you if making a similar decision will benefit you. In other words, your brain uses fear and stressors to help you make successful decisions that have a higher chance of being life-giving.

Fear is a necessary, important part of life. It is an integral component of your survival and can be useful when you are in dangerous situations; but what happens when you can't tell the difference between something life-threatening and something uncomfortable, something traumatic and something difficult?

We respond to triggers and stressors whether they are perceived or real, and if our brain can't tell the difference between perception and reality, it can't tell the difference between a bear and a deadline. And if our brain can't tell the difference between a bear and a deadline, our body is likely to respond to a deadline the same way it would to a bear. In broader terms, we respond to imagined threats the same way we do to real ones. That's when fear gets in the way.

Let's look at some examples.

We decided earlier that if a bear was chasing you through the woods, you wouldn't stop and relieve yourself or have a group discussion about how to handle the bear. In the middle of a fear-response, you're not thinking rationally. Deductive reasoning is not on the forefront of your mind. You are rightfully FREAKING OUT. The same things happens when faced with more modern-day stressors. Have you ever witnessed someone do something regrettable and upon confronting them with "WHAT WERE YOU



THINKING?!”, they reply with “I have no idea. My brain shut down. I was scared (or angry/confused)”? Why did they react that way?

“Fear is the the body's initial, instinctive response to literally every stressor it will ever encounter, both subconsciously and consciously, in order to keep you alive.”

Or what about when your boss asked you to see him in his office at the end of the day? Why did your anxiety rise? All he wanted to do was give you a raise for exceeding his expectations year after year. But you didn’t enjoy that experience because you were worried about getting fired. Why?

Let’s say you were in a severe car accident and nearly lost your life. It was a terrifying, emotional experience. Six months later, you’ve moved on and you’re fully healed and recovered. Driving down the road one day, you stop at a red light. Suddenly, behind you, you hear brakes squeal and tires screech. You panic. Your blood pressure rises. Your heart rate goes up. Even after you realize the other driver has maneuvered safely past your car, you become increasingly more emotional. Why such a “freak out” response, even after realizing you were safe?

The first time around, fear helped you survive. Perhaps in your near-death accident, it prompted you to slam on the brakes or swerve to avoid the tree, saving your life. Now, your fear response is triggered again, only this time it isn’t needed. Instead, it causes anxiety and stress. Your brain thinks you’re in a life-threatening situation, and it can’t register the difference between perception (an accident is happening) and reality (I am safe from harm).



These are the situations when fear becomes unhealthy. It hinders us from leading connected, present lives. Knowing this, it's easy to see why it's important for us to understand how we can manage our fears so we can respond to our triggers in healthier ways. To do that, let's explore the specific "employees" (or structures in our brain) that are involved when we are experiencing fear.

PART TWO: THE NEUROSCIENCE OF FEAR



**What Is Involved
And Why**





To have a full grasp on the concept of fear, we need to know what's going on in the parts of our brains that experience fear. To do that, we need a little lesson on brain anatomy.

Let's talk about the basics of the way the brain is structured and what that means in terms of *function*. **Because structure drives function.**

- Brainstem
- Right Cortex (Hemisphere)
- Left Cortex (Hemisphere)

These three regions are all incredibly integrated and connected, but they also have very unique functions. Let's cover those briefly.

The **brainstem** is the foundation of your Central Nervous System. It's the first thing developed in utero, and it operates all of your vital organs--all of the things that make you tick as a human being. For instance, your brainstem regulates your heartbeat, breathing, digestion, blood flow, taste, touch, sight, sound, smell, sense of movement, and every organ system in your body.

Towards the end of your mother's third trimester, about the time you were ready to be born, your **right cortex (hemisphere)** took charge of your brain development. This right hemisphere was critical to your first couple of years of survival. It brought your immune system online. It developed your non-verbal communication, digestion, and physical ability to move. Movement is huge because while your brain is activated and developed through all five common sensory systems, the complexity of your brain is primarily developed through this "sixth sense"--movement. As you increased the complexity of your movements over the first two years of your life (rolling over, crawling, standing, walking, running, etc) you subsequently activated, integrated, specialized, and trained the variety of



“employees” (or parts of your brain) to perform their unique functions. At roughly two years old, your **left cortex (hemisphere)** took charge over your brain development. Ever heard of the terrible twos? That’s the left brain coming online. It encouraged you to be curious about the world. You started asking “why” because you realized there were certain limitations for you. You became aware that you were somehow separate from the world around you. Your left brain allowed you to investigate, discover, and begin thinking for yourself.

We dive much deeper into the function of each region of the brain in *The Neurotheology of Self Care* online video course, but in this eBook we’re going to focus specifically on the **brainstem**.

The brainstem is the foundation of your Central Nervous System. You’ve probably heard it called your “primal brain” or your “instinctive brain”. It’s also commonly referred to as your “reptilian” or “lizard brain”. As you may be gathering from it’s many aliases, the brainstem is all about your survival.

The brainstem is also referred to as your Autonomic Nervous System or Automatic Nervous System. It runs on autopilot, and it’s always on in the background. The brainstem is broken down into three individual sections, and each section has two halves, adding up to six general areas of your ANS. The oldest section is called your **midbrain**. It can be found at the top of your brainstem hidden at the center of your big brain (known as the cortex). Ever heard of your “fight, flight, or freeze” system? That’s controlled by your midbrain. Every single person on the planet instinctively pursues one of these general avenues (fight, flight, or freeze) when they encounter a situation that launches them into survival mode. They are either going to buck up and engage (fight), run away and withdraw (flight), or play dead and become paralyzed (freeze).



Some of the primal emotions generated out of your midbrain are: rage, lust, panic, sorrow, and hysteria. When you are escaping a bear, it's necessary for you to either be hysterical or enraged because there's no time to think. You must be able to instinctively react.

The midbrain is the space you need to be in when responding to a bear. It's always on, always running, and always working to keep you alive.

The other two sections of the brainstem are called your **pons and medulla**. They are two separate sections, located just below your midbrain, that work in tandem. Known as your PMRF, this system is also referred to as your "rest and digest" system, or "poop and recoup". Along with the midbrain, the rest and digest system is also designed to keep you alive, but in slower, more passive, and gentler ways.

"The midbrain is the space you need to be in when responding to a bear"

Your rest and digest system helps with consistency in digestion and nutritional absorption, regulating calm heart and breathing rates, maintaining and promoting immune function, vital organ functions, and regulation of sexual and reproductive systems. It helps you survive by regulating your sleep cycles, helping you calm down, helping you recognize (subconsciously) that you are safe, etc. In short, it's primary goal is to keep you alive, but not through the fight, flight, or freeze paradigm. Instead, **it keeps you alive through the paradigm of "rest and digest."** It is important to understand that your rest and digest system works in direct opposition to your fight, flight, or freeze system, and vice-versa. That means, like a seesaw, when one system is "up the other system will intrinsically be down. Fits of rage and hysteria are appropriate when you are running from a bear, not when you are discussing a missed deadline with your boss. As such, **the rest and digest**



system is the space you want to be in when trying to meet a deadline.

The challenge is, our brain can't tell the difference between perception and reality--a bear versus a deadline. When fear goes up, cognition goes down. When everything feels scary and dangerous, instead of responding from the rest and digest system (from a space of peace and calm), we respond from the midbrain in primal ways forgetting that the situation is benign (non life-threatening)...

"The rest and digest system is the space you want to be in when trying to meet a deadline."

We've now arrived at the intersection of neuroscience and spirituality. In the following sections, we'll explore how these two fields impact and rely upon each other in regards to the conversations around fear and safety.

PART THREE: THE INTERSECTION OF NEUROSCIENCE AND THEOLOGY



The Flesh, The Midbrain,
And...The Hulk





One of the analogies I often use with my patients is the story of Bruce Banner and the Hulk. Just in case you're unfamiliar, I'll give you a little background.

Bruce is an intelligent, sane, lucid professor who also happens to be a brilliant scientist. The Hulk is a muscular green humanoid with a staggering amount of strength known for destruction and raging out, and he seems unable to control it. He literally smashes everything (and screams "HULK SMASH!!" while doing so).

The interesting thing? Bruce Banner and the Hulk are the same person. They just happen to exist in different circumstances. Though Bruce Banner is a sane person, when he finds himself in threatening situations--when he is fearful--he loses control and "hulks out".

Here's the thing: **both neuroscience and spirituality show us that everyone has a Bruce Banner and a Hulk.** We all have the capacity to be intelligent, controlled, and healthy. We also all have the capacity to hulk out. And this is an everyday thing. Have you ever been in a road rage situation? Or have you ever been in an argument that got way out of hand, and at the end stepped back and wondered, "why did that escalate so quickly"?

It's because, as we've touched on already, there are mechanisms in your brain that decide when fear goes up and cognition goes down. When you perceive danger, you hulk out. This can happen not only in physical spaces, but also in mental and emotional spaces. In neuroscience, we call this a "mesolimbic escape", which is a fancy way of saying you let the hulk out of his cage.

What I find interesting in my studies of both neuroscience and spirituality is there are often scriptural descriptions of what we learn about in functional neuroanatomy. The examples we'll explore can be applied to all major religions, but for the sake of brevity I'm



going to reference the Christian perspective. Feel free to correlate the analogies described in this eBook to your own personal spiritual experiences. My goal is to be descriptive not prescriptive.

"Both neuroscience and spirituality show us that everyone has a Bruce Banner and a Hulk."

First, let's talk about the neuroscience and spirituality of self-control. Neuroscience introduces us to the geographical and functional idea of higher and lower brain function. Higher brain function takes place in your frontal lobe. It's the capable, cognisant Bruce Banner who is lucid and rational, able to control his actions. Lower brain function happens in your midbrain. It's that primitive, subconscious space where the Hulk lives. Spirituality communicates this same concept; just in a different language. Self-control is often discussed throughout the bible. We see the Apostle Paul periodically write about "the war within his members" or "the spirit warring against the flesh". In his letter to the Romans, he spends a whole chapter bemoaning the fact that he finds himself constantly fighting against himself, doing the opposite of what he knows he should (and wants) to do. He also says, "the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the spirit is life and peace". There's a struggle between "spirit" and "flesh", and sometimes he wins, sometimes he doesn't. Sound familiar?

Your "hulk" or "flesh" is the lower, instinctive response you have to fear, which takes place in your **midbrain**. These responses can often be harmful to those around you if they go unmanaged. They are the self-preservation and self-gratification responses. In contrast, your "Bruce Banner" or your "spirit" is the higher function which is capable and rational and operates out of your **frontal lobe**.



Your spirit warring against your flesh is the same thing as your Bruce Banner trying to keep your Hulk in check which is the same things as your frontal lobe trying to reign in the responses of your midbrain.

We've all been in situations where we've gotten so worked up we need to walk away or take a deep breath and count to 10 in order to calm down. What's happening is Bruce Banner, our frontal lobe or "spirit" is trying to reign in our midbrain or "flesh" that is hulking out.

Remember, primal responses and instincts are not inherently evil. We need them to keep us alive in times of danger and stress. However, our lives are not always filled with life-threatening scenarios. As we begin to mature, our frontal lobe must take charge over our midbrain. Bruce Banner must defeat the Hulk. Our spirit must rule over our flesh.

In order to live a life of higher function where the spirit rules over the flesh and Bruce Banner reigns in the hulk, we must be able to tell the difference between bears and deadlines. In the last part of this eBook, we'll explore practical ways to help you manage your fear and foster an experience of safety.

"Our frontal lobe must take charge over our midbrain. Bruce Banner must defeat the Hulk. Our spirit must rule over our flesh"

**PART FOUR:
MANAGING FEAR
AND
FOSTERING SAFETY**



Self-Awareness and Perspective





One of the first things we need to know about managing fear is the importance of two powerful resources: **self-awareness and perspective**. It is important to first distinguish the difference between perspective and self-awareness. Simply put, you can have perspective without self-awareness, but you can't have self-awareness without perspective. Change in perspective is a sprint. Self-awareness is an ultrathon. Your perspective can be altered in a moment based on how you view an experience, but a significant change in self-awareness requires intentional investigation and analysis. Questions can and should be asked. For example, when you reflect on times of distress you can ask yourself, "What physical sensations do I experience in my body when I think about this? How do I behave in moments of fear? What thoughts go through my mind? What emotions do I feel during and after these times of fear?" Then, with those questions, take time to consider your responses. Notice patterns, important information, and recurring behaviors. Use this to build an understanding of yourself. Over time, as you practice the art of introspection, self-awareness develops. Doing the hard but necessary work of asking and answering these questions WILL increase the depth and breadth of your self-awareness. Ultimately, self-awareness is your most powerful resource for creating a healthier lifestyle. Foster it.

Self-awareness is a vital resource not only because it allows you to feel and experience your fearful circumstances more mindfully, but because it allows you to foster a deeper and more meaningful level of perspective that helps you realize that you are, in fact, safe. Self-awareness says, "I'm uncomfortable and this may be something I need to process, but what happened in my past is not actually happening right now, and I am safe. There is no need to fear." Self-awareness gives you the space to acknowledge that You. Are. Okay.

From a neurological context, if you have trauma in your past, it's critical that you recognize you are examining your history, not experiencing a current event any time you recall or discuss that memory. Because your brain is hardwired to keep you alive and wants to



avoid danger at all costs, it has potential to perceive your memories as present reality; therefore causing your brain to respond the same way it did when you first experienced it. For example, if you recollect a traumatic loss in your life, you're likely to become emotional. Even though you know logically it's not happening again, it's likely you'll experience the same flavor of physical, emotional, and mental response you did when the event occurred. This process can produce what is known as secondary traumatization, and it can occur through visualization and imagination alone. Intentionally recognizing your memories as historical events and not current experiences is a profound way to minimize, and possibly eliminate, the threat associated with these powerful moments in your story. In fact, the definition of "recognition" (re-cognition) literally means, "the identification of a thing or person from previous encounters or knowledge". So, when you "re-cognize" your triggers and reframe your perspective, you are literally allowing your brain the opportunity to say, "I have been here before and I have the knowledge of what is and isn't real in this very moment." This utilization of this perspective will be a powerful resource for you as you journey towards greater self-awareness and self-care.

"Ultimately, self-awareness is your most powerful resource for creating a healthier lifestyle."

With self-awareness, you can tell the difference between perception and reality. With self-awareness, you can stop reliving your past as if it's happening to you all over again. You can embrace the idea that your history can inform you, but it doesn't define you. Your past is an educator and trusted advisor, not a present-day threat. Your pain and wounding are teachers who help you gain focus and increase your capacity to respond to danger and complexity in healthy, life-giving ways. You can use self-awareness to make informed decisions when responding to fear. Instead of an uncontrolled response, you can shift your mind towards accepting that you are safe in reality, no matter what your perception thinks.



In *The Neurotheology of Self-Care* e-course, I provide three full-length videos that cover additional strategies for managing fear and fostering safety. They are titled:

- *Hopeful, Grateful, Learning*
- *The Six Basics*
- *Reframe and Rebound*

Although it's impossible to fully explore these strategies in an ebook, I want to briefly touch on the essence of each of them here because they're some of the most effective tools I've discovered for managing fear and promoting a healthy sense of safety.

In the *Hopeful, Grateful, Learning* video, I introduce the concept of leveraging **pragmatism** and **optimism** and steering clear of **pessimism**. Essentially, pragmatism allows you to acknowledge the reality of the challenges you face while maintaining hope that you'll be able to manage those challenges well, resulting in a positive outcome. One helpful practice I suggest is to use the phrase:, "I am hopeful for ___ because___, and that makes me feel ___". This exercise is extremely useful for moving away from pessimism and towards pragmatism. In a situation where you find yourself being controlled by fear, take a step back and engage in this practice.

"I am hopeful for ___ because___, and that makes me feel ___."

In *The Six Basics* video, I highlight the six basic ingredients of self-care, which are: breathe, rest, sleep, hydrate, eat, and move. These are key areas of your life where even minor improvements can make a significant difference in your physical, mental, and emotional health. This is good news because a healthier version of you has a much greater chance at managing and responding to fear in healthier ways. You can get a head start on *The Six Basics* right now by ensuring you are drinking enough water. Neuroscience shows that a 2% reduction in your water levels can result in a 12% reduction in your overall cognition. To calculate your recommended amount of daily



water, take your body weight, divide that number by two, and drink that many ounces of water per day.

"Your body weight \div 2 = ounces of water per day"

In Reframe and Rebound, I show you how to respond after you've been triggered and are in a state of fear or distress. First, it's vitally important that you step back from your situation and take a deep breath. Breathe in for 1 second and out for 2 seconds. Or breathe in for 3 seconds and out for 6 seconds. Whatever it takes for you to step back and catch your breath. Breathing gives your command center time to take over again, removing control from your primal midbrain that wants to respond instinctively.

"Neuroscience shows that a 2% reduction in your water levels can result in a 12% reduction in your overall cognition."

Next, express what you are experiencing. Vulnerability about what you fear often accelerates your capacity for feeling safe. A statements like, "I feel afraid right now because ____" is a healthy way of honestly expressing what you are feeling without accepting your feelings as truth. Then, once you've been vulnerable about what you're experiencing, follow up with clarifying questions that move you from honesty to truth. This is important, so don't miss it:

Honesty is not the same as truth.

In a moment of confrontation with a close friend, partner, spouse, etc., it might be honest to say you feel unloved by them, but it may not be true that they don't love you. The goal is



to be solution-oriented so we need to ask clarifying questions once we've expressed our fears. Ask the person you're in conflict with, "What did you mean by that?" or "Sometimes I don't know the right things to say or the right questions to ask. What would you like me to know?"

These are good ways to help your brain understand that the current situation is full of possibilities and opportunities rather than a potentially dangerous or life-threatening trauma. As you clarify and declare truths, your brain is able to reframe the situation in a healthy way so you can rebound and respond accordingly. This strategy takes intentional practice, but it's extremely effective in moving you from feeling afraid to feeling safe.

NOTE: Truly dangerous or life-threatening scenarios are not appropriate times to utilize these strategies. Those moments call for swift and immediate action to remove yourself and your loved ones out of danger. The Reframe and Rebound strategy is designed for uncomfortable, difficult conversations and experiences, not for moments of real danger. These strategies are just a few practical ways to begin managing fear in your life. It's unrealistic to say that following these strategies would completely eradicate fear; we all know life doesn't work that way. But clinically speaking, if you follow these practices, you could realistically see a 3-5% improvement each year in your ability to manage fear and promote a healthier brain. It's a marathon, not a sprint, and it's exciting to be able to see and celebrate measurable success.

I'd like for you to stop reading for a second and write down a few ways you can enlist some of the concepts we've discussed to help you manage fear in your life right now. I'm confident that if you begin to put them into daily practice, you **WILL** see improvement in the next 30 days. I also encourage you to register for *The Neurotheology of Self-Care* video course for full training on how to implement each of these strategies (and dozens more) as you continue your journey towards optimal mental, emotional, and physical health.

CONCLUSION



Moving Forward





trust this eBook has proven helpful and insightful for you, and that you are walking away with some practical applications to help you manage fear in a healthy way.

You've learned about:

- The nature of fear, where we discovered that fear is not inherently evil, but is actually our body's instinctual survival response designed to promote life
- The neuroscience behind fear, where we explored what is going on in different anatomical areas of our brain (especially the primal midbrain) when we are experiencing fear
- The intersection of neuroscience and spirituality, where we saw that Bruce Banner and the Hulk from Marvel and the Spirit and the Flesh described by the Apostle Paul are expressing the same truth; they are different ways of characterizing healthy and unhealthy responses to fear, and both promote the ultimate goal of healthy self-control
- Managing fear and fostering safety through practical applications such as increased self-awareness, transformed perspectives, and the process of "Reframe and Rebound"

My hope for you is that you will be able to take this information and implement it in your daily life with the goal of becoming a healthier, more whole version of yourself. The road to health and wholeness is a long one, and the aim is not to achieve perfection--just steady improvement day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year. Remember, we're going for gradual improvement: 3-5% every year is great progress. Don't forget this as you're learning to manage fear and promote safety.

Keep practicing the ways of managing fear in your life that you identified and wrote down at the end of Part 4. I'd encourage you to add some measurable, achievable goals to that



list so you can celebrate your progress over the next few weeks, months, and years. And please, share them with me! I would love to be a part of your self-care journey. When you register for *The Neurotheology of Self-Care* video course, you'll become a member of an online community full of folks courageous enough to embark on this journey towards health and wholeness, just like you. We can't wait to have you.

With Gratitude,

Dr. Jerome D. Lubbe

Functional Neurologist

Founder of Thrive Neuro