



Give Fear A Name And It Becomes Just A Problem

By:
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The school was deserted when they showed up; the kids wouldn't arrive until eight thirty. Paul's image went straight to the office, removed the bank report from his briefcase, and started working the calculator with clumsy fingers. With every subtotal he grimaced a though experiencing actual physical pain. Rafe watched with the fascinated stare of a child examining a bug under a magnifying glass. "What's going on in his head right now?"

"How should I know?" Paul replied, causing Rafe to look at him with arched eyebrows. "Well, what I mean is that it's a pretty confused jumble in there. I guess he's mainly worried about money."

"Okay, so the problem is money," Rafe said. "What are some things you can do to raise money?"

"It's not that easy!" Paul shot back. "He's—I've—tried everything."

"Everything?"

"Just about. Most of these kids don't have parents who could pitch in, and I can't put them to work, because it's against the child labor laws."

"So the problem is changing the laws?"

"Oh, that would look great in the newspapers, wouldn't it? 'Noted child-welfare activist puts children to work in factories to raise money for his school.'"

"Okay, then what about Joan's suggestion to call Bill Roberts, or to ask your father for a loan?"

"Not on your life," Paul countered. "Roberts would string me out for as long as it amused him, then shoot me down. Dad would tell me to get a job."

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Rafe rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “So the problem is learning to deal with rejection?”

“I deal with rejection just fine, thank you.”

“What about Phyllis Nesserbaum over at New Trails Learning Center? Have you spoken with her?”

“How do you know about New Trail?” Paul asked suspiciously.

“Let’s just say I get around. Don’t they have money?”

“Rafe, they’re the competition!”

“Competition? Aren’t there enough troubled kids to go around?”

“Of course there are enough troubled kids, Rafe. There’s not enough money. And Nesserbaum gets more than her share. Any help she gave me would come with a price tag—giving up control of my school.”

“So the problem is trying to work with Phyllis without losing control?”

“I’m afraid that’s a real problem, Rafe, trying to work with Phyllis without having her take over everything.”

Rafe smiled. “If it’s just a problem Paul, then you don’t need to be afraid. You may be unable to conquer fear, but you can always solve problems. If you give fear a name, then it becomes just a problem to be solved.”

A loud *snap* punctured the silence as Paul’s image cracked a pencil in half and flung the pieces across the room.

“We’d better go out before someone gets hurt,” Rafe said. “Who know what cosmic havoc might be created if your double killed you with a broken pencil.” In the hallway Rafe took a drink from the cooler. “When you were in college, how come you decided not to jump out of that airplane at the last minute?”

“How do you know about that?”

“I told you, I get around. Was it the same reason you hate roller coasters?”

“Yeah.”

“The same reason you keep your savings in a bank account instead of the stock market?”

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“How do you . . . Never mind. Basically, Rafe I’m a coward. The reason I have no glory is I have no guts.”

“Now we know what fear calls you, Paul. It calls you coward. Of course you’re not a coward. Prudent and risk-averse, perhaps to excess sometimes, but certainly not gutless. But when you allow fear to apply a label to you, you gradually assume that identity. With each new opportunity to take a risk, fear whispers into you ear, ‘You can’t do that. You’re a coward.’ And you nod in agreement. Isn’t it true that despite all the risks you’ve taken in starting up the school, you see yourself as more ‘cowardly’ today than you did ten years ago?”

GIVE FEAR A NAME, TALK TO IT. FORCE IT TO BE RATIONAL. NAME
YOUR FEAR

AND IT BECOMES JUST A PROBLEM. IT’S EASIER TO SOLVE PROBLEMS
THAN IT IS TO CONQUER NAMELESS FEAR.

“Well, yes, but—”

Rafe cut him off with a raised hand. “Saving money for the children has nothing to do with it, or you’d have gotten what you call ‘a real job’ long ago. The fact is you are beginning to accept the identity that fear wants to give you. Give fear a name and it becomes just a problem; let fear name you and *you* become the problem.”