

THE SCOOP- February 2009

Dealing with the Unknown in Career Transition

In the book "Iconoclast", neuroeconomics professor Gregory Berns (<http://www.ccnl.emory.edu/greg/>) writes about how "fear distorts perception and inhibits action." When faced with uncertainty (which is a part of any career transition) deeply ingrained, conditioned fears are often triggered by the amygdale (the survival brain).

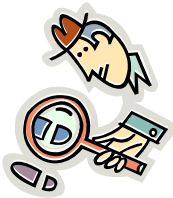
These common fears include the fear of the unknown, the fear of rejection, and the fear of failure. If you are anxious about what is next, worried what others are thinking, or wondering about how you are going to pay the bills, you are in the grip of fear. Fear limits your options, clouds your thinking and actually distorts what you see in yourself and the world around you. So what can you do?

Recognize that you have choice! Make more conscious decisions by anticipating and managing your fear instead of letting fear direct your job search. Berns notes, "There is growing neurobiological evidence that when people reappraise emotional circumstances, the prefrontal cortex (intellect) comes online and inhibits the amygdale."

Experiment with a few of the following strategies to experience your fear, short circuit your panic, engage your creative mind, and create space for your innate wisdom to come forward.

- Recognize that no matter how it may appear, everyone is wrestling with this conditioning. You are not alone.
- Become more aware of your emotions as indicators, messages or clues. Simply notice or witness the energy of boredom, sadness, interest, confusion, discomfort, apathy, peace, anger, happiness, jealousy, excitement, and worry and where it lives in your body.
- When you are feeling other than positive or neutral (whether it be while you are interviewing, searching for work, or talking about your career transition with friends), "reinterpret the emotion" and "reframe the circumstance" by using a pattern interrupt method from Larry Wilson's book, "Play to Win". (www.larrywilson.com)
 - **STOP** by taking a deep breath. Pause. Don't act.
 - **CHALLENGE** what you are thinking. Get curious about your perceptions, opinions, assumptions, interpretations, and conclusions.
 - **CHOOSE** a response that best serves the long term desired result you want.

- Face the fear directly. Invite the fear to speak to you as if it were a person. What information does it have for you? What does it need? How is it serving or hindering your career transition?
- Give yourself a deadline to calm down the fear. Can you allow yourself 6 months to find your next assignment? Are you willing to spend 4 hours a day in job search mode? Will you talk to 3 people each day?
- Play with perspectives. What if the unknown was a friend instead of a foe? What if there is magic and surprise in the land of ambiguity that is beyond what you can imagine for yourself? What if there is a reason for your current circumstance that you'll understand later?
- Check that what you are feeling originates with you before you give it your time and energy. Consider Candace Lienhart's research that "just because you feel it doesn't mean it's yours." (www.kahunakindergarden.com)



- Look for evidence. How have you found jobs in the past? How has the universe supported you so far? What work has come to you naturally? What fears in the past have you overcome? What fears in your history have been illusions or "false evidence appearing real."?

- Don't let fear win! Gain clarity and take aligned action. Check out our new career transition workbook, "Essentially You @ Work: A Career Transition Guide". (<http://stores.lulu.com/brainstormingalamode>)



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