



ALTERNATIVE CHALLENGE: SLAY YOUR DRAGONS

The 'core curriculum' of challenges for The Kin Project focuses on what we can do for our planet and those we share it with. However, the alternative challenges focus on what we can do for ourselves. It's hard to do anything for anyone else if you are burned out. These alternative challenges are here to refuel our tanks.

This alternative challenge is about conquering your fears in order to lead a more fulfilling life. If you think about your biggest goals in life, and then think about why you haven't accomplished those yet, you'll probably come to the conclusion that fear is what's holding you back. Fear causes us to come up with excuses rather than go after what we want. Learning how to overcome fear is the single most powerful thing you can do to get more joy out of your life.

PART 1: WHAT IS FEAR?

Fear is a bit like alcohol - the first step is admitting it's a problem. Don't deny your fear or hide from it - treat it instead as a cue to take action. Fear itself is a normal evolutionary response - you're feeling it because you're human. It's nothing to be afraid of - it's just your body and brain trying to keep you safe. Unfortunately, these days, the things we are afraid of aren't usually things that can kill us. We're typically afraid of things like public speaking, which isn't exactly on the top 10 list of things likely to cause death.



When you're afraid, you'll feel your heart beat faster and your breathing quicken. You may feel a "pit" in your stomach, feel dizzy, sweat or get a dry mouth. Your muscles may feel more tense or weak. These are all results of your body sending extra adrenaline and blood to your muscles and brain. It's preparing you to fight or flee – but it often happens in situations where we don't really need to do either - such as a job interview.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is like long-term fear. Anxiety is fear for the future rather than fear of the present and stops us from doing beneficial actions like asking someone out (what if I'm rejected?!), investing our money (what if the stock market crashes?!) or switching careers (I'll look silly as a 35 year old assistant!).

The problem with anxiety is that if you spend too much time worrying about the potential consequences of things that haven't even happened, you're losing the current moment. And, you guessed it, the current moment is your life. That's all life is - a series of moments. If you're spending all those moments worrying, your anxiety is basically costing you your life. It can also cost you your health, as stress releases cortisol in your body which causes problems with sleep, with focus, with maintaining a healthy weight, and even with your immune response.

Anxiety is extremely common. If you have difficulty falling asleep, can't concentrate and replay the same scenarios in your head over and over, these are signs of generalized anxiety. Anxiety can also manifest in a more acute way: panic attacks. Panic attacks come on suddenly and cause shortness of breath, sweating and chills, a pounding heart and an overall sense of dread.



Phobias are also common. Phobias are an extreme fear of a very specific situation, object or animal. Spiders, heights, public speaking and enclosed spaces are a few well-known phobias. I know a woman who has a phobia of tomatoes. She unfortunately lives in Italy... pizza and pasta are practically best friends with tomatoes.

Tackling your fears and anxieties opens up the world. And, in the case of my friend in Italy, some wonderful meals.

PART 2: TECHNIQUES TO OVERCOME FEAR

I'm a fan of Mel Robbins' very simple and straightforward method of tackling fear. She calls it the five second rule and it works like this. If you have the thought that you should do something, count to five and then just go do it. As Mel explains, If you have an impulse to act on a goal, you must physically move within 5 seconds or your brain will kill the idea.

The five second rule stops you from talking yourself out of achieving your goals. For example, you get up in the morning and think, "I should go for a run." Immediately, your brain starts working against you: "It's probably cold out. Your running bra is uncomfortable. Have a coffee first and go later." If you listen to this little voice, you're not going on that run.

That little voice also stops you from having fun. Imagine you're on holiday, and you see your friends leaping off the diving board into the pool. You think, "That looks fun, I should try it." But, your brain then immediately starts talking you out of it: "You'll look silly. You'll probably get water up your nose. The water's probably really cold." etc, etc. Don't let



your fear stop you from having fun. Try Mel's technique the next time you're tempted to do something that's out of your comfort zone. Read a full description of Mel's technique here: <https://melrobbins.com/the-5-second-rule/>

Tony Robbins (no relation to Mel...) is one of the most well-known gurus when it comes to personal development. Below are his techniques on how to overcome fear (www.tonyrobbins.com).

1. IDENTIFY YOUR FEARS

Learning how to overcome fear is much like any problem-solving challenge in that you must identify the challenge in order to overcome it. What is it you're afraid of? Sit quietly for a few minutes and observe your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Write down what comes up, and be as specific as you can.

2. RECOGNIZE THAT FEAR CAN WORK TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Our emotions exist to tell us things. When you feel fear, your soul is trying to tell you something – so listen. If you feel overcome by stress or distracted by a subtle-but-persistent anxiety, it's likely a subconscious fear that needs your attention. Rather than avoiding it, overcoming fear requires [leaning into your anxiety](#). View the fear as a piece of information instead of a threat to your survival. When you use anxiety to your advantage, it can't ruin your life. In overcoming fear, it becomes your ally – a critical source of guidance to reach your full potential.

3. SIT WITH YOUR FEAR

There are times for action and times for reflection. Acting too quickly to overcome your fear can lead to behaviors that do more harm than good, like reaching for a drink,



indulging in comfort food or even repressing the feeling entirely. Next time you feel fearful, try something new: Do nothing. Sit with your fear for a few minutes. Think about it. What is the root cause? What is the story you tell yourself about why you can't overcome this fear? This isn't to say you shouldn't take action. A moment of reflection can have a great effect on overcoming fear in a way that is productive, deliberate and effective.

4. CREATE GOALS THAT ARE "MUSTS"

Oftentimes the process of overcoming fear becomes stymied by uninspiring or elusive goals we set for ourselves. To turn this around, ask yourself: What does the life you desire and deserve look like? Is it just a "someday, maybe" plan or do you actively work toward it? Is it something that is attainable and you're willing to commit to? The first step in overcoming fear is identifying whether or not [you're creating a compelling goal](#). If you accomplish this, will you [feel fulfilled](#)? Conversely, if you don't accomplish this, will you be lost?

Dig deeper into your goal. What is your ideal outcome? Is it [financial growth](#) – more money in the bank? Maybe you want the [financial independence](#) to travel anytime, anywhere? Consider what your life will look like if you don't achieve this outcome and compare it to what your life will look like if you do. Once you feel that your goal is essential, the fear of not trying at all eclipses the fear of failure – that's when you'll be inspired to act.

5. RECOGNIZE THE EXCUSES



Fear makes you put things off. “I’m really tired. I have other stuff to do. It’s a dumb idea anyway.” These excuses probably sound familiar, don’t they? You’ve probably said this out loud and to yourself. Think about it. Is there any truth to these statements, or are you constructing excuses to avoid potential failure? It’s much easier and less painful to make excuses than it is to put in the long hours and energy it will take to work toward your goal, but excuses and opting out will ultimately leave you feeling unfulfilled. If you want to find out how to conquer fear, you need to take a different, proactive approach.

Recognize when you are using excuses and figure out how to overcome them. Too tired? Adjust your schedule so you can get a better night’s sleep. Not enough time? Assess your priorities and find out where you can **make time**. And the next time an excuse comes to you, make the decision to not give in to the little voice telling you “No,” because it won’t help you grow in the long run.

6. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH SUCCESS

You’ve probably heard of the idea that, in essence, you become the people you surround yourself with. Tony puts it another way: “Whatever you hold in your mind on a consistent basis is exactly what you will experience in your life.” If you’ve turned your “shoulds” into “musts” and recognized all your excuses but still aren’t sure how to overcome fear and put your goals into action, it’s time to examine your focus.

People who are truly focused on overcoming fear and achieving their dreams surround themselves with others who have the same mindset. These are people who you not only



look up to, but who will push you to achieve your goals. To overcome fear, you need to [raise your standards](#) – and allow others to hold you accountable.

7. ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

When you're afraid, you tend to stay in one place. What if you make a mistake? What if you fail? You start to believe you can't progress at all, that you're incapable of it – the fear holds you back. One of the most powerful tips to overcome fear and anxiety is to adopt a [growth mindset](#). It's not about achieving your goals and being perfect every step of the way. No one is ever perfect all the time, so stop striving for that. It's about getting comfortable with what you don't know and continuing anyway – this is the foundation of a growth mindset.

No matter how many mistakes you make or how slow your progress, you're still way ahead of everyone who isn't trying. As you work to overcome fear, you will realize that there will be lots of trials and tribulations along the way. As soon as you've accepted that the path to success includes growth and change, you'll be one step closer to attaining your goals.

8. FIND VALUABLE INSIGHT IN PAIN

No one likes pain. Most of us go to great lengths to avoid it. But pain is a profound teacher. If you accept that your life and your efforts to achieve your goals will be painful at times, painful experiences become opportunities for growth. When you let go of pain as a threat to your survival, it loses its power and becomes another tool for overcoming fear. Everyone experiences hardships in life. It doesn't matter whether your setbacks are



personal or professional – what matters are the lessons you take from those experiences and how you apply them to your future. Instead of letting pain and fear dictate your decisions, actively choose to learn from those painful moments to be in control of your own life.

9. VISUALIZE YOUR GOALS

You've done the mental work: identifying the real reasons you're holding yourself back and determining your must-haves in life. But overcoming fear requires that you practice these habits daily so they will lead to true action. Identify your problems, but give your power and energy to solutions. [Goal visualization](#) is one of these solutions. It's used by some of the most successful athletes, actors and entrepreneurs, like Michael Phelps, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Will Smith and women's soccer star Carli Lloyd, among others.

Goal visualization sets your focus – and where focus goes, energy flows. It can take the form of priming, meditation or [imagery training](#). The important thing is that you see yourself succeeding and fully immerse yourself in your goal. You'll condition your brain to believe that anything is possible – a key step to overcoming fear.

10. ACCEPT THAT YOU'LL FAIL

What's the number one fear people have when it comes to accomplishing their goals? [That they'll fail](#). But like pain, failure can teach us. In fact, failure is often a better teacher than success. If you accept from the onset that failure is an inevitable part of success, you'll be less afraid of it. Failure can provide you with valuable learning experiences that will positively impact your future strategies.



Everyone fails. Successful [business owners](#). World leaders. Prominent chefs. Artists and scientists and doctors. Our society shies away from talking about failure, and instead celebrates successes; this creates the false impression that to be truly successful you must never fail.

Part of overcoming fear is recognizing that everyone on the planet – including those you know and admire – has encountered failure on their path to greatness. The quicker you realize your fear of failure is preventing you from making the decision to accomplish your dreams, the sooner you'll be able to accept the possibility of failing and move on.