

What is Behind the Fear of Success?



What do you suppose will happen when you finally achieve all you've dreamed of? Aside from the expected upticks in your income and the ability to buy more things, travel more, invest more, and do more of what you really enjoy, what else could happen?

If you're like a lot of people, you haven't really looked at the downside to achieving all that success. You may have some vague notion that things will change, and they most certainly will, but you may also have assumed that all those changes will be good ones. At least that's what your conscience thinks. If you have a fear of success, your subconscious has been actively engaged in ensuring that none of those things happen by working diligently to keep you comfortably at status quo.

Fear of success is a hidden, subconscious belief that if you actually become successful, dire consequences will ensue. It means that no matter how badly you want to achieve success, no matter how hard you work for it, and no matter how strong your will is to achieve it, your subconscious will do everything in its power to prevent it. And trust me, the subconscious is far more powerful than you might expect.

If you have a fear of success, you may experience one of five anxieties when you think about your goal. Simply



anticipating your success can trigger these subconscious anxieties and lead to the complete opposite of your intended

outcome. I'll talk about two of those anxieties here.

The first is a fear that if you become successful other people, those most important to you in particular, will love you less. That you will lose their affection and they will think less of you. If as a child you were criticized or belittled – if your parents held little hope that you would ever achieve anything significant – validating that opinion by complying with it

ensures that you do not defy or disagree with their judgment. It keeps you in their good graces. Remaining average confirms for them what they suspected all along. You don't make them angry by defying their opinion and they reward you by continuing to approve of your current potential. You can work for their approval or work for results, but you can't do both.

The second anxiety is a fear that you will not be able to handle an increase in status. It is a fear of increased responsibility. Naturally as you become more successful you will gain more responsibility. The benefits of achieving success might be appealing, but the change to who you will become and the responsibility that goes along with it, might feel unnerving. Perhaps we're just not up to taking on that type of significance – we'll feel like a fraud or we'll feel embarrassed. Maybe we'll be expected to say and do and be things that just don't feel comfortable. Maybe we'll humiliate ourselves by trying to do more than we think we are capable. Seeing who we could be and actually stepping into that role require different sets of skills.

There is good news. These subconscious anxieties aren't real, they are phantom thoughts that take up residence in our underlying beliefs to keep us from stepping up and stepping out so we don't hurt ourselves. They're just beliefs. And beliefs can be changed.

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