Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: Can I handle it?

Can I handle writing an essay on Susan Jeffers' amazingly successful self-help book *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*? I am not quite sure yet; it all depends on my protected, creative "bubble", in which fear is not welcome. What is there to fear when writing an essay? The biggest fear in this regard is to write a completely pointless, superficial text which is no use for anyone – a complete and utter waste of time. I am going to face this fear by writing anyway. About what exactly and why? My motivation to write about Susan Jeffers' international bestseller is partly linked to my thinking about carrying out workshops on overcoming fear. Another motivator is a dear relative of mine. I will try to find out what's in it for her. Last but not least, I am determined to work out what's in it for my dear readers and me.

**TURNING POINT**

Susan Jeffers used to be a very fearful person. She was desperate and full of self-pity. Interestingly, one day, she could push through her negativity and resolve to bounce back. Thanks to her liberating and energising turning point experience\(^1\), she could initiate her very own odyssey from *pain to power*. Giving workshops about overcoming fear was part of this journey which culminated in Susan Jeffers' "travel account": *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*.

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**THE NATURE OF FEAR – GREEN OR RED LIGHT?**

As Susan Jeffers approach is educational and not therapeutic she does not aim at resolving conflicts of the past for overcoming fears. The author encourages the reader not to scatter energy wondering where the fear is coming from, yet she tries to shed light on the nature of fear. According to the *Queen of Self-Help*\(^2\), there are situation-oriented\(^3\) and ego-related fears\(^4\), which all boil down to the ultimate fear: "I can't handle it!" Moreover she postulates *Five Truths about Fear*:

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\(^1\) Susan Jeffers recounts her turning point experience in the introduction to her book: "...Then one day, as I was dressing for work, I reached the turning point. I happened to glance in the mirror, and saw an all-too-familiar sight – eyes red and puffy from tears and self-pity. Suddenly rage welled up inside me, and I began shouting at my reflection, "ENOUGH.......ENOUGH.......ENOUGH!" I shouted until I had no more energy (or voice) left. When I stopped, I felt a strange and wonderful sense of relief and calm I had never felt before. Without realizing it at the time, I had gotten in touch with a very powerful part of myself that before that moment I hadn't even known existed......"

\(^2\) Susan Jeffers, Ph. D., has been dubbed "the Queen of Self-Help" by The Times in the UK and is considered one of the top self-help authors in the world (Feel the Fear And Do It Anyway – blurb)

\(^3\) Level 3 fears: e.g. aging, public speaking,....

\(^4\) Level 2 fears: e.g. rejection, failure,....
1. The fear will never go away as long as I continue to grow.
2. The only way to feel better about myself is to go out......and do it.
3. The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out....and do it.
4. Not only am I going to experience fear whenever I’m on unfamiliar territory, but so is everyone else.
5. Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness.

People who hold their fear from a position of power interpret fear as a *green light*. Thus they move ahead and push through their fear. They might not even call it fear but adrenalin rush. I find Truth 5 especially important because it implicates that giving in to your weaker and frightened self is not an option. You have to push through your fears otherwise you surround yourself by fuzzy fears and a feeling of helplessness. Action is necessary to move from pain to power: *ACTION IS VERY POWERFUL*!

**PAIN-TO-POWER VOCABULARY**

Words can be powerful as well. Below you find my selection of Susan Jeffers’ Pain- To-Power vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAIN</th>
<th>POWER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I should</td>
<td>I could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's not my fault</td>
<td>I'm totally responsible</td>
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<tr>
<td>It's a problem</td>
<td>It's an opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life's a struggle</td>
<td>Life's an adventure</td>
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<tr>
<td>If only</td>
<td>Next time</td>
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<tr>
<td>It's terrible</td>
<td>It's a learning experience</td>
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Doubtlessly, the way we talk (to ourselves) determines amongst other things whether we are on or off the "power and love track".

**COMFORT ZONE CONCEPT**

Taking risks and relaxing are key to the comfort zone concept. People stretch themselves out of their comfort zone by taking risks repeatedly; eventually they feel more comfortable, stronger and powerful in a specific area of their life.

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3 Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: page 25
4 Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: page 34
5 Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: page 37
6 In her book Susan Jeffers explains the connection between love and power: "*The truth is that love and power go together*. With power, one can really begin to open the heart. With no power, love is distorted." – Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: page 37
RESPONSIBILITY & SAY "YES"
Another key towards becoming more powerful is taking full responsibility for your life. Forget about all the moaning and groaning, blaming other people and bad luck; it's irrelevant. Truly responsible people look at the opportunities in every situation. What is more, even in case there are hardly any opportunities these people would keep a responsible mind. Susan Jeffers refers to Viktor Frankl who was capable of keeping both a sane and responsible mind under unquestionably terrible circumstances. Being still in charge of his mind he did not give away his freedom to choose his mind's reaction to the inhuman circumstances. Truly taking responsibility means saying "Yes" to any situation that life brings along. It's the precondition for grouping your inner forces in order to make the most of any given situation. Leading a truly responsible life requires awareness and clarity. Susan Jeffers states that "Taking responsibility means being aware of payoffs that keep you stuck." The payoff for suffering, having bad luck and for being ill could be the attention you get from your fellowmen and from your loved ones. Becoming aware of these psychological mechanisms is the precondition for taking responsibility and action.

POSITIVE THINKING – MAKE IT A HABIT
Reality is neither positive nor negative. It doesn't even exist without our consciousness as we create our own reality. We see things the way we are and not as they are. Powerful and positive thinking makes us and our body either strong or weak. In her book Jeffers describes a partner exercise which verifies this phenomenon. With negative affirmations physical strength goes down the drain. Positive thinking is something you have to practice regularly, otherwise you lose the skill. It's like hygiene for your brain – don't stop taking your mental and spiritual "showers". Susan Jeffers advises her readers to keep repeating positive affirmations for outtalking the inner chatterbox. That way you can stay centered and tap your source of power.

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION
Positive thinking is powerful but it's all wasted if you are permanently surrounded by energy vampires who drag you down. Your social network reflects the way you are as like attracts like. In case you want to change your attitude by becoming more responsible, positive and active you might experience resistance. Maybe it's time to make new friends and to risk losing touch of some of your current friends. Losing friends is bad but what is even worse is when your family and possibly your mate consciously or unconsciously sabotage your efforts to evolve from pain to power.

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10 Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: page 56
11 "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." Anaïs Nin – www.quotegarden.com
12 ...I then ask her to put her arm down, close her eyes and repeat ten times the negative statement "I am a weak and unworthy person." I tell her really to get into the feel of that statement. When she has repeated the statement ten times, I ask her to open her eyes and extend her arm again exactly as she had before. I remind her to resist as hard as she can. Immediately, I am able to bring down her arm. It is as though all strength has left her........(page 70)
Susan Jeffers experienced opposition from all the three above mentioned areas (friends, family and mate). Her journey from pain to power was bumpy at first, as she was alternating between passivity and aggression, but gradually she evolved towards Healthy Assertiveness.

One key to resolving issues with your family and your mate is to create win-win situations and to avoid reacting defensively. That's easy from a position of power but difficult in case you have self-doubts and low self-esteem. Susan Jeffers recommends to act-as-if\(^\text{13}\) you would trust in yourself. Another way to overcome resistance is to apply verbal Aikido, which is basically about non-aggressive self-defense where you try not to harm your "opponent."\(^\text{14}\)

Part of the above visualised stabilising process is to become more and more independent of other people's approval. Interestingly, the less you need someone's approval, the more you are able to love them.\(^\text{15}\)

When dealing with the social dimension the Queen of Self-Help uses bold letters twice to give emphasis to two statements:

<table>
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<th>My suggestion is: Believe that your mate wants what is best for you and that he or she will ultimately love the positive changes in you. (page 95)</th>
<th>It is amazingly empowering to have the support of a strong, motivated and inspirational group of people. (page 86)</th>
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I'm really fond of Susan Jeffers choice of fonts as both statements are very important and deserve to be emphasised. Assuming that your not evil-minded mate will eventually like the way you're changing is sensible. It's undoubtedly important to look underneath the surface to find out about each other's interests and worries. That is the precondition for finding win-win solutions and for generating synergies. Admittedly, if the worst comes to the worst, your partner is not capable of growing

\(^\text{13}\) By the way, the act-as-if tool is a classic among coaching concepts.
\(^\text{14}\) Susan Jeffers recommends the book *Aikido in Everyday Life* by Terry Dobson and Victor Miller. Dobson and Miller are convinced that "the best victory is the one in which everyone wins."
\(^\text{15}\) *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*: page 101
with you. When you rock the boat it could mean sink instead of swim for your relationship. Is it worth the risk, then? Absolutely! Don't compromise on your staying true to yourself. It's not about being a hard-nosed bastard who doesn't care about collateral damage. Staying true to yourself is essential for loving yourself which in turn is crucial for loving someone else.

According to Jeffers the support of an inspirational group is amazingly empowering and I agree with her 100%.

**NO-LOSE DECISIONS**

Another key to becoming more powerful is the ability to make decisions. Sometimes people behave like the proverbial donkey who is incapable of deciding in between two attractive alternatives. Due to the donkey's indecisiveness the animal chooses to starve. It's decision by default.

![Hay bales and donkey diagram](image)

Very often people are stuck in the above visualised donkey dilemma because they think in terms of right or wrong with regard to decisions. The NO-LOSE model shows a relaxed way out of the rut. Regardless of which path you choose there is something positive in it for you: a learning experience or "Goodies".

![NO-WIN vs NO-LOSE models](image)

Don't take yourself and your decisions so seriously, lighten up and trust in your ability to handle whatever comes your way. Inform yourself about the alternatives at hand and try to feel your decision with lightness in your heart. After you have made your decision use the phrase *throw away your old picture* and look out for what you really get as a consequence of your choice. The actual result can be different to your original plan (=picture), but so what, it can still be equally or even more rewarding. If you find out that you don't like your chosen path any longer change it and don't worry about...
resources being wasted. There were "Goodies" on your old path and there will be "Goodies" on your new one.

Be stubborn in a flexible way by repeatedly correcting your path without losing sight of your "destination"; act like an airplane with a guidance system (see graph below)

Don't be afraid of the "Oops" and rather start worrying in case you are not making any mistakes. The Queen of Self-Help advises the reader to bear the following two affirmations in mind in order to conquer indecisiveness.

• IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER
• SO WHAT! I'LL HANDLE IT

ABUNDANCE & GIVING
Another key concept for becoming more powerful and fearless is giving – out of a position of love and trust without expecting anything back. Genuine giving is not about having second thoughts. The very act of "proper" giving is supposed to be rewarding for its own sake because it feels good. Through genuine giving you can get in touch with your Higher Self – divining that your life and your purpose can be bigger than yourself.

But what if you never get anything back? What if you believe in abundance but your fellow men stick to their win-lose thinking? You need a lot of intrinsic security and humour to manage genuine giving when being surrounded by a scarcity mentality. Bear in mind that an abundance mentality and positive thinking are infectious. If you stay true to your path and insist on being a giver (of love, praise, information, thanks, time and money) you might eventually have a healing effect on the people in your vicinity. In addition to that as like attracts like you become surrounded by more and more positive people who believe in abundance. Then synergies can be generated and public victory can happen. In case you manage to handle both private and public victory your life becomes "whole."

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17 Susan Jeffers is referring to the different paths and decisions you can take. IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER which path you choose because there are "GOODIES" either way.

18 In his book "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" Steven R. Covey states that public victory is preceded by private victory.
WHOLE LIFE & SPIRITUALITY
When being interviewed by Piers Morgan in *Piers Morgan Tonight* Oprah Winfrey states that she is "very clear that her life and her purpose are bigger than herself." She makes clear that she is equipped with a very accomplished *Higher Self*. Oprah Winfrey's *Power Wheel of Life* is endowed with a whole lot of momentum. I am sure that she is in the flow of things most of the time – her *Wheel of Life* is turning and maybe sometimes spinning.

I was introduced to the *Wheel of Life* method when I attended a (free) coaching course at the Coaching Academy in London in June 2010. I find it a very handy tool for working on yourself and your balance. The closer you are to the wheel rim the stronger you are in the specific areas of your life. At the coaching seminar we were instructed first to name the areas of our life, then to assess ourselves and later on to think of possible actions for becoming stronger in the "spokes" of our life. The *Power Wheel of Life* is a blend in between Susan Jeffers WHOLE LIFE GRID and the "Coaching Academy" *Wheel of Life*. As "Health" was missing in Susan Jeffers' – to my mind – not so whole LIFE GRID I added this undoubtedly very important area to the *Power Wheel of Life*. In the *Power Wheel of Life* the inner guidance system, the "Higher Self" and the "power house" are situated at the very core. It contains unlimited power – the force within. The methods and tools provided by Susan Jeffers in her book all aim at releasing the power within.

PLENTEY OF TIME
The challenge is to stay on the exciting and adventurous path to power and love, to be patient, to make fear your companion and to trust your intuition. Let your inner

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19 When Oprah Winfrey was interviewed by Piers Morgan in the TV show *Piers Morgan Tonight* in January 2011 she stated that: "I am very clear that my life and my purpose is bigger than myself."
20 For information about the Coaching Academy: www.the-coaching-academy.com
guidance system, your hunch and your *Higher Self* take the lead and when in doubt bear in mind: "It's all happening perfectly."\(^{21}\)

**NOW WHAT? HOW TO GET ON TRACK**

Could I handle it so far? What do you think? To my mind the whole process of getting to the core of Susan Jeffers recipe for life and relating it to my own knowledge and my experiences was worth it. There was a lot in it for me and my planned workshops and I hope it wasn't completely pointless for my readers either. However, I'm still skeptical with regard to the dear relative of mine, because unlike Susan Jeffers, *Eckhart Tolle and Dr. Helmut Aigelsreiter*\(^{22}\) she hasn't had her "spiritual" turning point experience yet. Is it advisable to wait a bit longer until the suffering and the pain gets sufficiently unbearable to trigger the turning point experience? I DON'T THINK SO.

Waiting is not a smart strategy in this regard as your turning point experience might never show up. In his audio book "The New Psychology of Achievement" Brian Tracy states that "the great majority of people – 80% by their own admission – live lives of quiet desperation".

To my mind it's not always quiet desperation but rather not quite enough desperation. The graph right below which is an adapted version of Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis is supposed to visualise this stalemate.

![Force Field Analysis](image)

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How can this dilemma be resolved?

What about *acting-as-if* you have had your turning point experience or you just tell yourself that this is your moment of glory and you get cracking? Why not behave in a

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\(^{21}\) Susan Jeffers uses this positive affirmation in chapter 12 (*There Is Plenty of Time*) – page 202

\(^{22}\) Susan Jeffers "mirror" experience reminded me of two other liberating turning point experiences. In the introduction to his book "The Power of Now" Eckhart Tolle describes how he was drawn into "what seemed like a vortex of energy". He could set his course to spiritual enlightenment. "Same, same but different" for Dr. Aigelsreiter’s journey from pain to power. In the introduction to his book "Die 7 Aigelsreiter" he describes how he got in touch with his inner force; it was the initiation of his physical self-healing process. Among these three turning point experiences, the one described by Eckhart Tolle is the odd one out. Tolle’s inner voice told him "resist nothing". Therefore I'm inclined to liken his experience to an implosion, while the other two seem to be more like a counter strike and a powerful explosion.
proactive manner and start acting before you are acted upon? Bear in mind that the tools provided by Susan Jeffers work regardless of whether you have had your "spiritual" turning point experience.

Napoleon Hill\(^\text{23}\) might claim that a *burning desire* combined with *personal initiative* would bring the break and turn the tide and I think he'd be right. He'd be absolutely right but nevertheless Hill's piece of advice would be of rather limited benefit for people who struggle with the habit of personal initiative and for people who struggle with sparking their desire.

Is there hope for these people? Absolutely!!! Maybe they just need a bit of "gang" power to get themselves moving and to break through their restraints.

**NO INNER BIG BANG BUT MEMBER OF A "GANG"**

| It is amazingly empowering to have the support of a strong, motivated and inspirational group of people. *(page 86)* | I know we have had this quote before but it's just so important. It's the key. |

Just by telling somebody about your resolution to evolve from pain to power you can considerably increase the chances that you stick to your path. Instead of waiting for a "spiritual" turning point experience you turn the tide by the use of "gang" power. Synergies can be generated and together with your goal buddy or your goal buddies you can "take over the world" or at least you can try to\(^\text{24}\).

**CONCLUSION**

"Feel the Fear And Do It Anyway" is not just a guide for overcoming fears; in fact it is a quite comprehensive "recipe for life". Susan Jeffers' provides the reader with highly useful and practical techniques and concepts for leading a more fulfilling life. The author’s approach is very sensitive and psychologically sound in that she avoids setting guilt traps. Unlike Jeffers success “gurus” like Napoleon Hill, his followers in "The Secret" and also the televangelist Joel Osteen\(^\text{25}\) favour an approach where there is no space for doubts and negative affirmations. According to these “gurus” some people are not going to get rewarded in case they lack faith and these people might end up being angry at themselves due to their inability to conquer cancer\(^\text{26}\).

Susan Jeffers' approach allows people to have doubts in between. One of her key messages is not to get angry at yourself in case you feel stuck in a rut. By taking

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\(\text{23}\) Napoleon Hill (October 26, 1883 – November 8, 1970) was an American author who was one of the earliest producers of the modern genre of personal-success literature. (WIKIPEDIA)

\(\text{24}\) Pinky: Gee, Brain, what you wanna do tonight?
The Brain: The same thing we do every night, Pinky — try to **take over the world**!

\(\text{25}\) Joel Scott Osteen (born March 5, 1963) is an American author, televangelist, and the senior pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. (WIKIPEDIA)

\(\text{26}\) In the DVD “The Secret" as well as in one of Joel Osteen’s sermons about “Mountain moving faith” the “cancer example” is being used to demonstrate the power of flawless positive thinking.
"mental showers" regularly and by not taking things too seriously you get back on track. You will never become fearless as long as you face new challenges. Make fear your companion in your life's adventures but don't give in to your fears. I would like to conclude my essay with Viktor Frankl's words – a man who practiced what he preached. "........Do I really have to give in to my weaker self? Do I have to put up with my fear? Can't I be stronger than my fear?"\textsuperscript{27} Think about it and act accordingly – it pays.


\textit{Viktor Frankl (http://www.nachrichten.at/nachrichten/kultur/art16,811249)}