



## Fear & Choices

### FEAR: False Evidence Appearing Real

Often, we put off making difficult choices out of fear – fear of what might happen as a result of our choice. This fear can keep us stuck, unwilling to make a change because we cannot guarantee the outcome of our choices. We become immobilized, effectively afraid of an outcome which has not yet happened and which may not ever happen.

*“No passion so effectively robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.” – Edmund Burke*

### Exercise- Resolving Fear

Divide a sheet of paper into three columns.

**Column 1:** What scares me? Name your fear or feared negative outcome. (E.g., *“I’m afraid if my child leaves my home then the situation will get worse.”*)

**Column 2:** Write the fear as a “what if” sentence. What if that happens? (E.g., *“What if the situation does get worse for my child?”*)

**Column 3:** What would I do in response? (E.g., *“I will feel responsible.”*)

Check in with yourself to see if actually confronting the fear and planning reduces the anxiety associated with it.

If it leads to another fear, such as feeling responsible for things getting worse for your child, then make that the next fear in the first column and continue. Example:

1. *“I’m afraid if things get worse for my child then I will feel responsible.”*
2. *“What if I do feel responsible?”*
3. *“What would I do?”*

Keep going with this until you have a plan. This technique allows us to create plans for these feared outcomes (which may never come to pass). This gives us more control over them and reduces our worry about them. It takes away the mystery and allows us to reassure ourselves that if the feared outcome does occur, we will be able to handle it.

NOTE: This exercise can be used for any source of anxiety, not just anxiety related to making a difficult choice.

Material adapted from: SMART Recovery Family & Friends Handbook, 2012 p. 135