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What Are You Afraid Of?

I recently started a project to renovate and expand the master bathroom in my house and made a startling discovery— I am afraid! This discovery was very concerning to me, and I found that this fear had permeated its way into other areas of my life. To put it plainly, I was afraid to try new things. Ten years ago, I put an addition onto my house and tried many new things. It had been 20 years since I helped my Father-in-law build our house, but I was doing this without his help. I simply asked a lot of questions and pushed on. Yes, I made some mistakes, but the addition and renovations to the kitchen turned out great. So why the fear now as I remodel a simple bathroom? Perhaps it's a fact of my age. I'm fifty-six now, not forty-six like I was when I built the addition, or twenty-six, for that matter, like I was when I started building the house. Determining why I am afraid is really secondary to deciding how I should conquer the fears.

Fear is a powerful deterrent to achieving our goals, and as you look into 2018, you will need to address fears in your life. As I reflected on my fear to try new things I found the following reasons:

1. Fear of the Unknown
2. Fear of Failure

Let's start with **Fear of the Unknown**. As I consider my fears about my renovation, I realized that much of what is unknown is only unknown to me. There are others who have all the knowledge I am lacking and can help me work through whatever issues I might be facing. There are great how-to videos on YouTube and detailed descriptions online for just about anything. I also had to realize that I don't need all the answers when I start something. I only need to know the next thing to do.

As you approach the New Year, in what areas of your life have you worried? I recently read a report that broke down worry like this:

- 40% of the things we worry about will never happen.
- 30% of our worries are about things in the past that can't be helped.
- 12% are needless health worries.
- 10% are categorized as petty and meaningless.
- 8% are legitimate worries.

Embrace your fear of the unknown. Lean into it, do some research, connect with people who can help you and teach you the things that you need to learn. One of my mentors loves to say, "get comfortable being uncomfortable."

The **Fear of Failure** is a fear that we must conquer quickly because it hinders our growth and learning. Someone once said, "if you want to double your success, double your failures. You only fail if you don't learn from the experience." When I was managing factories, and things weren't going the way we hoped, I would tell the team "The systems are talking to us. What are they saying?" Last year I was teaching at one of our member companies, and this question of failing came up. One of the attendees defined the word fail like this, **First Attempt In Learning**. What a great definition. When Thomas Edison was asked if he got discouraged by his failures, he replied "Not at all. Once I exhaust all the ways to not do something, I know it will work." Failure must be embraced as a lifelong friend of innovation and discovery.

Another fear that came to mind as I was writing this is the **Fear of Starting**. My wife and I planned the bath renovation ten years ago when the addition was completed. Can you imagine that? We wasted ten years in a small bathroom because I was fearful of starting another project. All I had to do was start and then things got rolling. Oh, I did have setbacks, things didn't go as planned, and I spent a few hours in the emergency room after cutting my thumb on a table saw. By the time you read this, we will, God willing, be using the new, enlarged master bath.

What opportunities, what victories, what enjoyments will you give up as you give in to your fears? President Franklin D. Roosevelt said it so well at his first inaugural address on that cold March day "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." It's time to conquer your fears!