

# A PEACE STRONGER THAN YOUR FEARS

## VIDEO ONE

Fear is probably our strongest emotion.

Fear affects us physically: our heart beats faster, our hands go sweaty, we get knots in our stomach. It affects us mentally too. Our minds become hyper-alert, and we're only able to focus on a very limited range of things. All of this makes fear incredibly powerful to shape what we do and how we feel.

Whilst we tend to think of fear wholly negatively, it is actually a helpful biological instinct. Fear warns us of danger. It moves us to fight or flight. Fear causes us to confront danger, or to run away.

Even when we're not in physical danger, fear can be helpful. It's true that the fears we face when there's a deadline at the end of the week might move us to flight: to find every reason under the sun to procrastinate. But fear can also move us to fight: to up our performance, hunker down at our desks and get the job done.

In these situations, fear is a kind of friend. Fear both causes us to run away from a tiger, and triggers the adrenaline we need to get through a presentation.

But what about when fears tell us about things we can do nothing about? What should we do when our fears speak of things too big to fight, and impossible to run away from?

In this case, the impact of fear can be highly damaging. Anxiety is sharply on the rise amongst students. Student Union welfare officers say that 40% of students report high levels of anxiety.

This trend is mirrored in broader society. We are apparently more fearful than previous generations, even though we live in one of the safest periods of history.

A quick look at the news reveals some of the sources of our fear. Unstable job markets, climate change, academic pressure and increasing loneliness all play their part in raising our anxiety levels.

For many of us, fear and anxiety come out of nowhere and are hard to shake.

They have a profound impact on how we live. Living in fear saps our energy, affects our sleep, ruins our relationships and even plays out in physical aches and pains. This kind of long-term fear and anxiety also affects our ability to relax, to trust other people and to make good decisions.

If flight and fight are impossible, what should we do with our fears?

Psychologists say that it is only from a place of safety that we can truly face our fears. This is why safe places and groups of friends amongst whom we feel safe are so valuable.

But they only go so far

An over-dependence on people and places can rob us of our freedom. And even in these safe contexts, our fears still encroach upon us and leave us feeling vulnerable.

Where can we go to find peace that's stronger than our fears? And what can inspire us to bravery and courage – even in situations where we naturally feel afraid?