

# A KICK-IN-THE-PANTS GUIDE TO:

## IDENTIFYING YOUR FEARS AT WORK

Fear is everywhere at work. A boss lays unfair blame on a direct report out of fear. An employee doesn't speak up in a meeting because of fear. Fear sabotages performance, so having an awareness of how fear shows up is one of the best ways to combat the barriers it creates.

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### Fear of conflict

Most people feel that anything other than "That's great!" is conflict. Conflict and confrontation present huge obstacles for many people. Yet at work, we don't often see actual aggression. What we do see are things like opinions that push the conversation, comments that require us to reflect, or questions that force us to consider an alternate perspective.

#### This fear sounds like:

- "She probably thought it all through, I won't ask."
- "It's fine. Really, it's fine."
- "I don't agree, but it's their idea."

**Remember:** Nothing good ever came from sitting on your hands as a bad idea unfolds in front of you.

2

### Fear of not being good enough

Many "enoughs" plague us, but most boil down to one in particular: good enough. There's the performance side of good: smart enough, talented enough, knowledgeable enough, accomplished enough, etc. There is also the value side of good: not worthy enough or undeserving.

#### This fear sounds like:

- "My idea probably isn't that good."
- "That other person should take the lead. She knows more."
- "I just don't think I'm right for that position."

**Remember:** It doesn't matter how you got a seat at the table, it matters what you do once you're there.



**We each have the power to reframe all the fear that's controlling us. Bosses aren't fearless, but they fear less.**



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### Fear of what others will think of us

We're all very concerned about what people think of us. On the one hand, that's human. But every day, in every office, people shut down their own words and actions because they are afraid of what other people will think of them. We think we will look too [insert negative characteristic here].

**This fear sounds like:**

- "I might sound dumb."
- "I don't want to take up too much time."
- "What if it's a bad idea?!"

**Remember:** Wanting to be liked will compromise your success.

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### Fear we'll do the wrong thing

When we don't have a road map or a set of instructions, some people cave under the pressure of doing the right thing. But nearly every job requires us to make some best guesses to get things done. We assume that there is only one "right way." Here's the thing: if there is not an obvious right way, then there are many right ways.

**This fear sounds like:**

- "I just don't know what to do."
- "I wish there were a clear step."
- "I don't have enough information to do anything."

**Remember:** Doing something—anything—is the right thing because there is no other way to make progress.

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### Fear of the unknown

This fear is deeply intertwined with the other common fears. It causes all the what-ifs we ask ourselves. We aren't sure what lies on the other side of a decision or an action, and that's difficult for us. So we don't do anything; we become complacent.

**This fear:**

- keeps us making predictable choices.
- Puts comfort first, at all costs.

**Remember:** Fear is keeping you from your better self.

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