



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

How to Overcome Fearful Thinking for Life

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | JUNE 23, 2019



"This could go very, very wrong."

"They might hate me for this."

"This new, uncharted creative project might flop."

"This investment is risky—it could fail."

Recognize these fearful, anxious thoughts?

On the one hand, it's good to be prepared and plan for what life might throw at us. Smart, right?

But what happens when we habitually lock onto those fearful stories about what *could*

happen? In a future that has yet to arrive? And give those stories more weight than the many possibilities for *positive* outcomes?

Here's what happens:

We perseverate on our fearful stories. Over and over and over.

We wear deep grooves in our minds with those fearful stories about the negative (or disastrous!) outcomes that *could* happen. And before we realize it, those stories become our truth—we *expect* them.

Our brains buy in. We convince our brains through our repetition that the events (that haven't happened yet) are true.

Our brains love this. They're designed to keep us alive by favoring worst-case-scenario stories about the future. They help us survive when we're in danger, fighting for our lives.

But we're usually not fighting for our lives, are we? We trick our brains with our fearful stories.

And our brains do what they do best—they prepare us beautifully for the impending disaster by mounting a full-on stress response to our stories to help us manage the fearful future.

Put that way, not too smart, is it?

The other side of this coin is the good news:

We're neuroplastic. Our brains can change. Our minds can change. *We can change.* This is entirely within our control.

We've just got to see it.

To grow, to heal, to claim our potential, *we must take control of our neuroplastic minds. We must take control of our stories.*

How?

Stop.

Get very, very quiet.

Look closely at your thoughts. Look squarely at the worst-case-scenario stories you've

conjured about the future that hasn't arrived.

Look at your stories. Give them a name. Say them out loud. Write them down. Accept full responsibility for them as yours. No one else's. No blame or shame—just what the brain does as a default mode of operation. And what controls you when you allow a passive relationship to your worst-case-scenario stories.

Then, very carefully, very consciously and meticulously, claim a new story. A fresh and shiny story. A story of your choosing. That you want. That leads to a better outcome. That's where you want your mind power and resources to go.

(And don't forget to breathe!)

Then practice.

Tell yourself those stories of your hopes, dreams, and infinite possibilities over and over and over again. Create deep mind grooves to support them.

(By the way—this is not wishful dumb thinking about the impossible or looking at things through rose-colored glasses. No, this is a smart exercise about real, though sometimes fearful, possibilities.)

Give them a name. Say them out loud. Write them down. Accept full responsibility for them as yours. Step over the well-practiced worst-case-scenario fearful impulses.

Then practice every day—those neuroplastic mind grooves of positive possibility get deeper. They become your default pathway. They make you more positive. And brave. And successful. (When has fear ever lead to your success?)

Oh, wow! How easy was that?

Have a Beautiful day!

p.s. I realize that actively claiming our stories begets its own fear. We have to traverse some risks to becoming our true awesome selves as we accept responsibility for our choices. Oh, squirm!

Would you like to dive more deeply into the scary yet *totally empowering* healing life of story mining and stepping up to the change needed to access your greatest desires?

Check out my e-book, [Big Energy](#).

Karyn Shanks MD. [Thought Shifting: Using the Power of Positive Affirmations to Change Our Minds.](#) 2016.

Karyn Shanks MD. [How to Heal: Identify the Competing Commitment Standing in Your Way.](#) 2019.

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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