



CULTURE WITH PHIL COOKE

That Fear in Your Gut? It's Not Going Away

And that's a good thing...

We spend an enormous amount of time trying to live without fear. We read books about being brave, take classes in gaining confidence, and spend tons of money on inspirational books and courses. That's not necessarily a bad thing – except for the fact that fear is one of the most powerful motivators on the planet. Fear of danger kept early human beings alive. Fear of war kept leaders working at diplomacy. Fear of poverty kept our parents and grandparents working hard. And today, while many of the things we fear may have changed, the emotion is just as relevant – and important.

I see too many leaders living in denial because they refuse to acknowledge the fear that their business, church, or non-profit is failing. I see others with no self-awareness, because to face their shortcomings would create too much fear.

Certainly there are overblown fears. When what I would call a **“healthy”** fear is replaced by an unfounded or out of proportion fear, that's a bigger issue that needs to be dealt with in other ways.

But for most of us, most of the time, we need to embrace it. Look at your fear in the face. Understand where it comes from. Your fear is the canary in the coal mine. It's the early warning sign that something needs to change.

That uncomfortable feeling in your gut when you do certain things or make certain decisions shouldn't be ignored, it should be welcomed. Here's the important point: Fear becomes your friend not when it's gone, but when it's overcome. When you've acted on the fear in a way that solves the problem... When your response to the fear is to fix the reason it's there.

Fear: Stop ignoring it, worrying about it, or denying it, and start responding to it.

What Overwhelms You?

You need to stop it before it stops you...

This is about how to get your story out there. It's designed for filmmakers, writers, pastors, musicians, business and non-profit leaders – anyone who has an idea or story burning in their heart that they need to share. But one of the greatest obstacles to getting your story out there is becoming overwhelmed with the process. It happens to me when I'm balancing too many things and get the sneaky suspicion that there's something important to do that I've forgotten about.

It usually comes when I haven't been paying attention to my priorities, am over-stretched, and not taken a close look at my notebook. When that happens, I usually get a wave of negative feelings, I find it tough to concentrate, I can't write, and feel like I have to get away. I can see a meltdown coming in the distance.

The bad news is that I hate that feeling. It eats away inside like cancer, and I feel completely helpless and anxious. The good news is that I know what causes it, so I can see it coming. As a result, I know what steps to take to alleviate it, and get things calm again.

What about you? Have you taken the time to identify the red flags that lead you to become overwhelmed? Until you do, you'll continue to get caught in the death spiral, and it usually happens at the most inopportune times – in client meetings, before deadlines, or in front of co-workers. Without intervention, over a period of time, these moments often lead to complete burn-out in a career.

Note that I'm not talking about serious depression or anxiety issues. Those need to be dealt with through a qualified professional. I'm talking about those moments when you simply feel overwhelmed, have hit a wall, and your creativity, productivity, and output bottoms out.

Know yourself. Learn to see it coming. Take the right steps to avert it; because righting the ship during those challenging times can often lead to your greatest creative breakthroughs.

When it comes to getting things accomplished, what are some of the things that overwhelm you?