



Fears for the Future

April 2010

The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

Things to consider:

- *Where do our fears for the future come from?*
- *How do we cope with the fear?*
- *Are my fears based on facts or the unknowns?*
- *Does this fear help or hurt us?*

Student Submissions

You need to go to college. End of story. That's the way my mom talks to me. The way my mom talks to me, it seems as if college is the end of my life, as if everything I've done for my whole life is to get to college. And frankly, I feel that I don't necessarily need to go to college. I guess thought is what scares me about the future. I feel like ive been brainwashed to a point in which im not gonna be prepared for what happens next. My moms telling me to study hard now. But im not learning anything besides that. Im scared about what I might have lost in the process, like maybe im screwed after college is over. I wish I redid high school, learning things I care about learning.

"I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know no way of judging of the future but by the past." ~ Edward Gibbon

Maybe I should be scared for college. But I'm not. Because whatever, I'll get in somewhere hopefully; get some kind of decent job, live in a small apartment maybe, I don't need any luxuries I just want a simple life.

What I'm scared for is having a family. And living alone or getting married then having my spouse file for divorce. I'm scared of being a bad parent or getting some disease and dying or losing connections with my friends; I'm scared of the day that I'll get a call saying that my parents died. I'm scared of getting raped and I'm scared of being discriminated.

But sorry, College, you have not entered my list of fears yet.

"The future comes one day at a time." ~ Dean Acheson

Usually people are scared about the future because it's something parents pressure you about all the time - "You have to get good grades to go to a UC" "You meet who you marry- become a doctor". But for me, I'm scared of so many things. I'm scared of dying. I'm scared of falling in love and getting my heartbroken. I'm scared of not living up to my hopes and dreams. I'm scared of my life in general and what's going to happen to it. I want to be able to live up to the expectations my family members have of me, but I'm scared I won't. I'm scared of not ever getting married and having a family. Of never becoming a pediatrician which is what I want to become. I'm scared of... everything.

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*"Promises are the uniquely human way of ordering the future, making it predictable and reliable to the extent that this is humanly possible."* ~ Hannah Arendt  
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High school is hard. It isn't immensely hard, but it's tedious, and long, and that alone makes it almost unbearable sometimes. Sure, there are only four years of it; less depending on where you are in your high school career, but high school isn't even the half of it. Because after high school comes college, and after that you work, and all through that you are saving up to retire, and after you retire you die. It seems like one's life is always just preparation for the next stage. That's what scares me about life: the prospect that I could go through my entire life and never amount to much. More importantly, that I could go through it all, all its ups and down, and never really be happy. I want to get good grades in school, because they are necessary to further my life, but not at the expense of my own enjoyment. If all you do is think about the future, you'll never enjoy yourself at all; whereas if all you do is have fun, you will never go anywhere in life. It's a two way street, and; too far in either direction and you get hit by a truck. I suppose that's what life's all about. Simply trying to situate your self in the metaphorical center of the street, where traffic usually doesn't venture. But that goal is hard to achieve, and figuring out HOW to achieve it is even harder. Personally, I have no idea, and I don't really think about it too much. I suppose that's how I manage to not get too scared of the future. Unfortunately, it does need to be figured out eventually, as the future will come eventually, slowly but relentlessly. And when that time comes, whenever it is, one needs to have some idea of where they're going and what they're doing with their life. I'm just glad that day isn't today, or any time in the near future, because to be perfectly honest, I wouldn't be even competent enough to figure it out

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*"Fear not for the future, weep not for the past."*  
~ Percy Bysshe Shelley  
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I anticipate and fear the future simultaneously. What it holds is not a very appealing picture for me, yet it is better than what is happening now. In fact, I can see myself 30 years from now, and while I sincerely hope that my dream will come true, there is also the very equal chance that everything can crash and burn. It used to be when I was younger, I loved thinking ahead because I was so sure that all my hopes and dreams would be fulfilled. Now, it is a very ambivalent subject for me. I anticipate the future because I will be away from my abusive parents and be able to establish my life without having that shadow over my head. Sometimes, I even play out scenarios about ripping into my parents about what they do to me on a daily basis before I go to college because they are so blinded by their actions; they think that they are perpetually in the right. But I know that I cannot do that if I hope to go to a decent college. On the flip side, I am also scared that I will never get over what happened to me for sixteen years, and whether one year in college can really mend something so painful. I anticipate the future because I hope I will be able to get into the college I want and be a doctor; yet I am also fearful that I will not get where I need to go. Call me cynical, but it's pragmatic. Being optimistic is a nice mindset, but it is not very realistic and certainly does not apply to real life. I do not know what the future holds in store for me, but I hope I can deal with whatever happens. Being free is really the part I am looking the most forward to, and I know in that that I will not be disappointed.

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*"These days people seek knowledge, not wisdom. Knowledge is of the past, wisdom is of the future."*  
~ Vernon Cooper  
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So I go into my lit class, and I find out that we're having a presentation about what courses to take and how to fill out the course selection form and what not. This gets me thinking about the future... What classes will I take? What classes do I need to graduate from Monta Vista? But then, what classes will get me into college? And what classes will let me skip some college courses? Then, I start thinking. Where will I be in 10 years? What am I going to be? The thing is, I don't know. I don't know what I want to be when I grow up. And that's the scary part. It seems like everyone knows that they want to be a doctor, or a veterinarian, or a lawyer. But I don't. And apparently, whatever you want

to major in helps determine what classes you should take, because colleges want to see you take an interest in something. But I don't know what I want to be! I'm scared for what will come. Since I don't know what I want to do, what am I going to do when I apply for college? Do I even want to go to college? What will happen to me? I wish I could just float around. Go with the flow, you know? Do I really have to decide everything now? What I decide now will determine my entire life! I can't make these decisions right away. What do I do?

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*"Everyone has it within his power to say, this I am today, that I shall be tomorrow." ~ Louis L'Amour*  
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I've lost my motivation, and I'm scared that I won't find it anytime soon.

Last year was exhausting. I can't even remember why, so it must have just been a build-up of work and stress and worry that just accumulated until I broke down. So, for those last couple weeks of the year, I remember that I couldn't motivate to do anything. But I figured it would be better in sophomore year.

I think it's gotten worse. All of the anchors that grounded me and the buoys that kept me afloat... have floated away. I'm breaking down, but for no reason at all.

I'm staying up late, and falling asleep in class, every single day. But if I had the motivation, I could get things done so much faster. Sure, I have a lot of stuff to do -- but my sense of timeliness, my time management skills, and so on have abandoned me. So when I'm still up at 3 a.m. with a test to study for and assignments to finish, I'm not freaking out like I should be. I'm still unable to focus on my tasks at hand. And I cannot figure out why. I was the "good student" for my entire school career. What happened? Is it going to get better? How can I make it better? What is going to happen to me junior year? I know that something must be wrong with me, and I'm scared because I don't know how to fix it.

Maybe if my passions were there to encourage me, but I feel rather devoid of passion. I don't know why I'm in the system that I used to love anymore. I don't feel that I'm making a difference or helping anyone or that my sacrifices amount to anything. So really, the only thing that keeps me in this system that I used to love is the hope that I'll re-discover my passion, and that I'll find the chance to re-live the experiences that made me fall in love. It scares me that when I ask myself "Why am I doing this?" I can no longer say that it is because I love doing what I do. I'm scared that I

won't be able to fulfill myself or re-discover that drive, that passion.

The thing is, sometimes (a lot of times?) the other aspects of my life depress me. Maybe I just can't get into the groove, into the mood to be passionate? But when I have bad grades in all my classes and my conceptions of myself have been turned upside down and I've lost touch with so many people, I guess I can understand how one part of my day no longer excites me as much.

It makes me sad to think about the friends I used to have, but don't have the time to connect with, anymore. There are people who I used to talk to and have a good time with, but I'm not even sure if it's weird to say "hi" to them in the hallway, anymore. My connection to the people I was friends with last year thanks to classes is so much shallower. If I get the time during lunch to hang out, I feel like a floater because I've been gone from the scene for such a long time. I'm scared because I don't remember how to interact with friends. I'm scared that I'm going to run out of friends by senior year. I'm scared that soon enough, we're going to graduate and when we finally meet up again, those friendships will be gone forever.

I'm scared that I have not only lost friends, but I have lost my family. I don't know why I'm so disconnected. I have no idea how to go back. I hate that little conversations can turn so easily into big arguments. I'm scared that when I go off to college, I won't miss my family. I'm scared that when I come back, it will be awkward and I won't know how to react. But I don't even know when it started to get like this, and I don't know how to make it better. I'm scared because I don't feel like a part of my family anymore.

I'm scared that I have forgotten how to love. I'm scared that I have forgotten how to be happy. I'm scared that I have forgotten how to be a friend. I'm scared because I can't recognize myself anymore, because I can no longer describe myself as the enthusiastic and energetic person I used to be. I can't remember the last time I felt truly excited and happy; the most I can remember is being content. I'm scared that I have lost myself, and in any case, I don't know what to do.

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*"The future is called "perhaps," which is the only possible thing to call the future. And the important thing is not to allow that to scare you." ~ Tennessee Williams*  
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Being the person I am, perhaps my biggest fear of the future is being hated by the people around me. I don't want to sound conceited or anything like that, but I am pretty sure people won't hate me (unless I do

something *really* stupid). Nevertheless, I've always had that fear and it doesn't seem like it will be going away any time soon.

Looking back into my middle school years and freshman year, I've seen that I'm mostly unhappy when either 1) a girl doesn't like me or 2) I think that a girl hates/doesn't like me. I mean, I've liked quite a few girls in the past and the feeling of being hated by them...well, it doesn't feel good. I remember spending days just thinking, "Oh no. She hates me! What am I going to do?" And that would keep going on and I would sometimes be brave enough to make a plan to do something about it. But that usually didn't happen and when it did, the plan never really worked out. Fortunately, none of those girls ever did end up hating me. None of my friends have ever ended up hating me. Even the person who "hates" me the most, says that I'm just too nice to be hated.

But the fear never ceases. I don't think about it--I just fear. I fear because I feel as if one day, people will all turn on me for all the evil things I've done (poking fun at people, not talking to people enough, ignoring people, etc.) and then I'll have no one to turn to for help.

I don't think about it--I just fear.

- *C'est la vie.*

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"*See how time makes all grief decay.*" ~ *Adelaide Proctor*  
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I've had and have lots of friends just like any other person in this world. But there's none quite like her.

We've known each other for so long, been through so many things together, and watched as the years passed by us--together. She's my very best friend, I can assure you that.

But there's been the bad things too. There are some things which we've had to endure alone. There have been times when I've felt more than just friendship towards her, but she hasn't seen me in the same way. And then there's my fear of losing her.

And you might ask: "Lose her to what or whom?" I don't even know the answer to that. But I always fear that it might happen.

And I fear it so much because those few times when I didn't have her there to help me out through the bad times...they were horrible. I didn't know what to do. There was no one I could turn to and there was nothing I could do. And if I can barely live without her as my best friend when I'm just in high school, how can I expect myself to live without her as my best friend later?

I'm also afraid that I might lose her to a mistake that I may or may not make in the future (depending on how stupid I become in the future). I've sometimes liked her more than just as a best friend and it just confuses me so much that I don't know what to do. One part of me wants me to keep liking her as more than just a best friend because there's really no one else I'd rather like. Then, there's the other part of me which just wants me to stay best friends with her because "best friends are JUST best friends." I'm just so scared that one day, I might do something as stupid as ask her out or something like that only to ruin our friendship once and for all. And then, not only will I have ruined my chances with her, I won't have a best friend anymore. Talk about a complete loss.

- *semper fi*

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"*Take therefore no thought of the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*"  
~ *Bible*  
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This seems really weird, but I have fears for my teeth in the future. I see old people and their teeth are completely messed up. They're yellowy brown and crooked and it scares me to think I possibly will have a mouth like this. I especially don't want to have missing teeth. How do you eat with like five teeth total? It must be a painful process for my teeth to fall out one by one. That's why I vow to take care of my teeth forever and hopefully prevent my teeth from becoming so disgusting.

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"*When I look to the future, it's so bright, it burns my eyes.*" ~ *Oprah Winfrey*  
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I have a fear of death, hopefully considered "of the future". The thing is, I'm not all confused about death. I'm not afraid of not knowing what will happen. I'm afraid of the never ending nothing. The ceasing to exist part is what gives me fears. Never knowing what's going on. Forever, black emptiness.

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"*Where will I be five years from now? I delight in not knowing. That's one of the greatest things about life-its wonderful surprises.*" ~ *Mario Thomas*  
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I really want to be somebody. I mean I don't care about being super famous like a household name, but someone pretty famous. I want people who don't know me to recognize me and want my picture. I don't know how I can do this though. I feel like people like

this had some sort of passion they worked at really hard and soon became amazing at it. I don't have any really strong passions or anything that I am particularly good at. Being somebody has been a goal of mine for such a long time. My mom recommended I go into politics, but it seems like all the politicians have gone to Harvard or some other crazy shit like that. With my grades, I think the best I can do is Davis. As time ticks away, and my chances of being a 16yr old prodigy pass by me, I get more and more nervous. When will I be famous?

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*"The mind that is anxious about the future is miserable"* ~ Marcus Annaeus Seneca  
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I don't worry about the future very much I think it will come when it comes. My grades are okay but I think that's mainly just because the people around me get good grades as well. I guess im going to college. I mean what else will I do after highschool. My only fear is that I don't want to die alone. I hope some chick is stupid enough to marry me

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*"Don't be afraid your life will end; be afraid it will never begin."* ~ Grace Hansen  
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I'm a dreamer. I want to have the perfect life that is portrayed in movies: being able to travel the world, meet new friends, meet a cute guy of my dreams, and overcome any obstacle with a happy ending. I also expect college to be this fantastic place where I can start my exciting and different life. I still believe that I can achieve this "future life", but when I go off to college in the Fall, I'm afraid that all my expectations and hopes aren't going to be fulfilled. I'm afraid that my life won't be as glamorous and "fun" as I'd want it to be. But, I know that in the end, no matter how different my life will turn out, or how different college life is, I know I'm going to enjoy it anyways. It's what I make of it that counts. So even though I'm fearing the let down of reality, I'm prepared to make the best of it.

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*"I will not let society's expectations control my future"*  
~ Anonymous  
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I have never wanted to grow up. Even when I was young and all the other girls pretended to be grownups, I never wanted to participate. I didn't care about the freedoms teenagers and adults had -- being able to go wherever, do whatever, whenever. All that scared me. What if I got lost? What is something bad happened to me? Who would help me then when I am

away from home and all alone? I know all this sounds so childish from someone who is so close to leaving home for college, but I can't help it. I wouldn't mind being young and careful and safe forever. I'm being immature, but can't I stay young forever? Not even high school young, but like elementary school young. Some days I get the urge to hide behind my parents and never face the "real world".

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*"Stop acting as if life is a rehearsal. Live this day as if it were your last. The past is over and gone. The future is not guaranteed."* ~ Wayne Dyer  
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in the future, i fear that the world will be smothered by the absence of love. people of different point of views will stop flying with unicorns and soaring with butterflies, and will face each other, fighting against each other as enemies. As of now, i am thankful that i am safe. i am also thankful that i have not given into the pressures of drugs and my peers. i am to forever be thankful

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*"In the future the very fabric of the world will be software. We will move from a world made up largely of static objects to a world where software controls the physical properties of objects."* ~ Anonymous  
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Just last week, my internet was cut off by an overgrown tree that toppled. For three days, I felt like I had nothing to do, and when I finally realized how foolish I was to not take this opportunity to partake in activities instead of spending my time on the internet, I felt a bit afraid. I fear my and the coming generation's dependency on technology. The world is slowly spiraling into a dependent hole of doom surrounding around technology, the internet, the ipod, etc. Nobody takes the time to search for the things that truly makes us happy in life because we have such an easy but artificial source of entertainment all the time.

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*"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength (and joy)."* ~ Rain Starr  
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My little sister has cancer, and for four years I've felt like I have it too. Going to hospitals, going to see doctors, going to her room at midnight to check up on her, it's been exhausting. I love my sister, I love my parents, but when someone you care about so much is so sick, your world and the world of your family revolve around that person. And now that I'm a senior, I can choose to leave that. I've gotten accepted to a few

UCs and privates on the east coast, and it sucks to admit it but I think about leaving so often, the farther the better, to create a life for myself separate from the life I have now. I fear leaving my family, I fear what will happen when I'm not here to take care of my sister, but the decision's too hard to make. I feel like I'm abandoning her, but if I stay I know I'll lose myself.

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*"Only one thing makes a dream impossible: the fear of failure." ~ Paulo Coelho*  
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One fear I have for the future is my marriage. It's pretty early for me to think about marriage like 10 years too early, but I think about it almost daily because of what I see every day between my own parents. I don't know why they stopped loving each other or why they can't even be in the same room together. I'm afraid of having a marriage like my parents' marriage. That's a major fear for me. I know that most people are afraid of not getting a good job or not having much money.. which is a valid fear, but I can't imagine living a life like my mother. Sometimes when she's just sitting and watching tv I look at her and everything is so apparent. Her loneliness, and difficult life... it is a lot to handle sometimes. And sometimes I analyze every aspect of my father to find characteristics in him that will help me to stay away from men like him... but I know that it's not about my father's characteristics. It's just my fear. Fear that I won't be able to make it work. Fear that it'll fall apart and I won't have any say or option or way to make it better. I don't want to be unhappy in life, I don't want to be married and still alone. I don't really know what a healthy marriage is like, so I'm afraid I won't know how to be in one. All I can hope for is that my future husband, whoever he may be, will have come from a happy family with parents who still love each other. At least one of us needs to know what's a loving marriage is like.

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*"The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time." ~Abraham Lincoln*  
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I think, to some extent, all of us fear growing up. We fear the prospect of becoming adults, having to pay the bills, work the jobs, and balance our lives with the torrent of responsibilities that come with the title "grown-up." Ironically, it's this fear of independence-- too much of it, in fact.

Having been raised in an environment where parents are monumental in helping me make decisions, "leaving the nest" is one of those nagging fears that makes me think....not necessarily turn stone-cold at the thought of it, but simply keep me awake at night occasionally wondering. I guess a lot of it is the intimidation of constantly hypothesizing in fragmented "what ifs." It's fear, really, of knowing that maybe, I won't get the life filled with passion that I'd intended. Or maybe that I won't be surrounded by people and will just end up like one of those lonely apartment dwellers who spend holidays by themselves.

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*"Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt." ~William Shakespeare*  
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I fear of what will come in the future. I am going off to college in a completely new state, and I'll be on my own- no parents or friends to depend on. It will be a completely new experience; heck, I actually have only been to the state once. It sounds terrifying, but it is time to embrace the future.

Understanding and Transforming Fear

By Maureen E. Ross, LMFT

Several times a day, clients come to my office bringing their fears with them. Since my clients range in age from 12 to 85, it is clear to me that fear is a cross-generational concern. For my teen-aged clients, fear about the future feels very intense and personal, at times both overwhelming and unbearable. And fear brings deep questions: Who will I become? Who will love me? What if I start out in one direction and change my mind? What if people find out how afraid I am? Where does all of this fear come from? How do I control and cope with my fear? Is fear harmful, or helpful?

Often it seems that once the mind heads in the direction of fear, there is no stopping it. And yet, when we understand and work with our fear, we discover that we have a direct connection to a reservoir of inner strength that can sustain us both now and in the future. Through self knowledge, compassionate acceptance of ourselves and others, and regularly experiencing joy, we find that we can meet any challenge, however fear-full, with more ease and grace. And, in the process, fear becomes an ally, a signal that we are off course and need to slow down, take a deep breath, and consider where we really are, in the present moment.

Fears are often tied to expectations – our own and others. In the teen years, fear arises when we look at the exciting/frightening prospect of leaving home, maybe to go away to college, even if the college we choose is nearby. We fear new and unpredictable experiences that will challenge us to grow and change in ways that we cannot imagine. We fear losing our old friends and we fear making new ones. We fear not finding someone to love who will love us in return. We also fear finding that person to love and then being asked to make the kind of commitment it takes to create a healthy, lasting relationship. We fear getting older and being overlooked, or physically challenged, or mentally impaired. We fear the ways our family will change, the particular ways our parents will age, and we wonder if we will automatically be like them when we are older. We hope we choose a life path that leads to success and happiness but, at 14 or 16 or 18, we fear that we do not have the skills and information to choose our path wisely.

Fear of the future manifests in many ways: as constant worry • depression • short temper • loss of appetite • difficulty remembering • quickness to anger • peevishness (wherein nothing seems quite right) • isolation and spending too much time alone • a constant need to be around other people • withdrawal from formerly pleasing and exciting interests or activities • loss of purpose and passion • poor sleep • sleeping all the time • mindless eating • even more mindless hours spent watching television • or playing on the computer • or endlessly shopping online trying to find that one perfect pair of shoes • or that one App that is a) really cool; b) that no one else has; c) that creates a distraction, in the moment, to forget about feeling miserable, powerless, and afraid.

Getting to know . . . me

Knowing our essential nature is one of the keys to healthy growth and development, and one of the antidotes to fear. When we know who we are, we develop insight into our motivations and behaviors. We have more compassion for ourselves and others, and what seems fearful becomes understandable.

Everyone has a certain way of orienting to the world that is uniquely their own, that is both consistent and understandable. Perhaps you are a Reformer: principled and idealistic, conscientious, with a strong sense of right and wrong. Or a Helper: caring, interpersonal, empathetic and warm-hearted. Maybe you are a natural Achiever: adaptable, success-oriented, self-assured, ambitious, competitive and full of energy. Or an

Individualist: sensitive, reserved and quiet, more romantic, self-revealing, emotionally honest, and vulnerable. You may notice that you are a natural Investigator: alert, insightful, and curious, with a preference for complex ideas, more independent than others, with a preference for solitude. Or you may be a Loyalist: security-oriented, hardworking, responsible and naturally a bit anxious. We all recognize an Enthusiast, someone who is always busy, productive, playful, high-spirited, and visible. We notice the Challenger when they enter the room: self-confident, strong and assertive, someone who wants to be in control and have things their way. And we gravitate toward the Peacemaker: easygoing, accepting, trusting, and stable.

When we have a clearer sense of our basic nature, we can begin to see what rocks the boat and creates fear. A Reformer fears being bad or defective. A Helper has a deep fear of being unworthy and unloved. An Achiever fears being worthless and without inherent value. An Individualist fears being without identity or personal significance. An Investigator fears being useless, incapable or incompetent. A Loyalist fears being without support or guidance. An Enthusiast fears being deprived of pleasure or trapped in pain. A Challenger fears being controlled by others. A Peacemaker fears loss of connection.

Knowing these tendencies in ourselves, recognizing our strengths and what causes our fear, creates mindful awareness. And mindful awareness creates choice. And choice feels good. And feeling good dissolves fear.

A Brief Pause

Let's pause here.

Take in a deep, deep breath. Fill your lungs, all the way down to your belly. Now release that breath.

Feel yourself sitting securely, or standing firmly, for just a moment, and take in another breath.

Notice your feet, firmly on the ground. Release that breath.

Relax your shoulders. Open your hands. Take another deep breath.

Close your eyes, briefly. Listen to the sounds around you. And release your breath.

Breathing in; there is only this moment.

Breathing out; release your fear.

Breathing in; feel calmer.

Breathing out; release all concerns.

Breathing in; soft eyes, a slight smile.

Breathing out; we continue.

Mindfulness

We are thinking our thoughts all the time. It's an illusion that we can be thought-free. So what do we do when our thoughts spiral into one fearful idea after another? Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is one technique that calms the mind by focusing awareness on the present moment. As we just experienced above, breathing deeply with calm awareness allows the mind to reenter the body and release fear. It's an effective tool that quells a storm of fearful thoughts. As Vietnamese Buddhist Monk and Peace Advocate Thich Nhat Hanh says: Breathing in, there is only this moment. Breathing out, there is peace.

When we focus on the present moment, we experience that we are safe, that we have choice, and that what we fear for the future is not here. This is what Eckhart Tolle calls "the power of now." When we are focused out there, in the future, when we are striving and worrying and controlling, when we are noticing what's missing, what's wrong, what someone else has that we want, then we feel driven to anger, jealousy and unhappiness. And this leads to fear. Mindful awareness is an antidote to flinging our thoughts "out there" beyond our grasp, beyond our awareness. When we feel our particular fear, we can stop, breath deeply, be thankful that the fear

helped us notice where we were going, and then we can return to the present moment where we are calmer and have choice. And that feels good.

Four Questions

Here is one more tool to increase self-knowledge and develop compassionate acceptance of ourselves and others, which leads to joy. Byron Katie has developed what she calls “The Work,” four questions that can lead to the truth. And, as we all know, the truth will set us free.

When you have a fearful thought, ask yourself these questions. Do not direct your mind to an answer. Let the answer come. Take your time, go inside, and wait for awareness to arise. Even small children have been taught to do this, with wonderful results.

The Four Questions are:

1. Is it true?
2. Can you absolutely know that it’s true?
3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe this thought?
4. Who would you be without the thought?

Here’s an example: “If I don’t make the absolute best choice about college right now, my life will be ruined forever.”

1. Is it true? Is there only one absolutely perfect choice for my education that will guarantee me happiness and success for my entire life??
2. Can I absolutely know that it’s true? Well, no, actually. I might not be able to see a better choice when I’m so worried and afraid of making a bad choice. All I’m seeing is my fear. I can’t see anything else.
3. How do I react, what happens when I believe this thought? I get really afraid. And the more I think this thought, the bigger my fear becomes. My heart races, my throat closes up, I can’t think, I feel like going away, I feel like a loser, I don’t want anyone to know that I feel like this, it’s exhausting and it’s time consuming. I must have something better to do than be afraid about making The Absolute Perfect Choice and being so focused on it that I miss out on what’s happening around me right now. What a waste of time!
4. Who would I be without the thought? That’s easy – I’d be happier. I’d be more fun to be around. I’d notice other people. I’d have time to be with my friends, I’d have more self confidence, and I’d be able to laugh at myself, in an easy way.

Byron Katie’s Four Questions help us see our thoughts differently. Fearful questions about the future can take on a power of their own, in our minds. When we welcome these thoughts, when we have the willingness to ask these questions and listen to ourselves, honestly, with compassion, we feel less fear.

All this Joy

We are meant to play, to live fully present in the moment, to receive and to give the gift of our one individual, absolutely unique, incomparable, delightful, unencumbered life. When we are free of fear, free of doubt, shame, and blame, we move easily into playfulness, collaboration and joy. Joy is necessary for mental and physical health. Joy creates bonds of understanding between people. Joy is infectious, in the best possible way.

When you notice your fear, and move toward it with understanding and compassion, you feel lighter, more available, more joyful, and more present to what is happening, here and now. Let understanding and awareness transform your fear. Give yourself the gift of gratitude for knowing that your fear is a sign-post that you have

moved off course from your best self. Fear comes and goes, it's only a thought, it's not real. It certainly feels real, in the moment. And: you can breathe through it, or ask yourself if it's true, and let it go.

You are more than your fear. You are lighter, brighter, and filled with more possibility than you can ever imagine, in this moment. It's true!

Maureen Ross is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in San Jose. She specializes in expressive arts therapy and family wellness, and delights in working with teens. Her office is located at 1885 The Alameda, Suite 130, San Jose 95126. She can be reached at (408) 425-7457.

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www.EnneagramInstitute.com – research, development and applications for Riso and Hudson's groundbreaking understanding of the nine basic personality types, with extensive descriptions of each type's strengths, challenges, basic desires, basic fears, and points of transformation.

<http://www.mikeriera.com/> - a great website for parents of teens; resources, information on Riera's program titled "Staying Connected to Your Teen."

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/home/index.aspx> - worldwide information on the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction programs developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and the team at University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

www.thework.com – Byron Katie's website. Katie asks the question: "Who would you be without your story?" Find instructions and worksheets for doing The Work.

Upcoming Issues and Submission Deadlines

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Sex and After Effects	6pm, Saturday 4/3
Parties	6pm, Saturday 5/1
Disorders and Disabilities	6pm, Saturday TBA

Ways to Submit

1. Visit us at www.verdadera.org. You can submit stories here, learn more about Verdadera, and meet staff members.
2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails, anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to verdadera.entries@gmail.com

Notice to Readers:

As of the April issue, we have ceased mailing the complete Verdadera issue via print. All issues can be accessed at <http://verdadera.org>. More information regarding receiving print copies of Verdadera will be available shortly.



Fears for the Future

April 2010

Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista students for the purpose of instigating communication concerning the reality of high school within the community. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by both parents and students. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present and feel free to email comments and feedback.

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