



# WHAT'S YOUR FEAR PATTERN

*Identifying your core fear can equip you to break the pattern that sabotages you.*

\*Note: This quiz comes from the book *Brave Enough to Succeed: 40 steps to getting unstuck* by Valorie Burton.

You dream of a more fulfilling career, but why aren't you going for it? Some of us insist "I just don't have the time" or "If I had more money, I'd do what I want." Peel back the layers, though, and you'll find the real reason for your hesitation: Fear. But what are you afraid of exactly?

Take this quiz and discover which of the **Four Core Fears** gets you stuck most often. Circle the answer that would be your most prominent thought if faced with the stated scenario. Tally which letters you circled most in response to the odd-numbered questions and the even-numbered questions. Then turn to the answer key to get insights that will help you muster the courage to conquer it.

- 1. YOU'VE SECRETLY WANTED TO DO SOMETHING NEW AT WORK. A POSITION FINALLY OPENS IN THE DEPARTMENT YOU'D REALLY LIKE TO WORK IN. IT'S A HIGHER-PRESSURE JOB, BUT THE REWARDS ARE BIG. YOU...**
  - a. Think about applying for it but wonder if you have a shot at it since some other candidates might have more experience.
  - b. Get anxious about the pressure. What if you can't keep up?
  - c. Wonder how you'll break the news to your boss. She thinks you're happy in her department.
  - d. Can't stop thinking about all the negative things that might happen if you "rock the boat" at this stage in your career.
  - e. Go for it. This is exactly the break you've been waiting for!



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**2. THE BUSINESS YOU LAUNCHED ON THE SIDE STARTS TO REALLY TAKE OFF. YOU COULD FINALLY QUIT YOUR DAY JOB AND DO THIS FULL-TIME! THIS HAS BEEN YOUR GOAL FOR YEARS. YOU...**

- a. Start asking, "What if I go broke? What if I'm out on the street and can't find another job?"
- b. Check the calendar to see how soon you can quit and turn in your letter of resignation.
- c. Aren't so sure your part-time success will translate into full-time success.
- d. Are afraid of being solely responsible for your own paycheck.
- e. Hesitate to tell your friends because they'll think you're crazy to quit your day job.

**3. YOU WERE JUST LAID OFF FROM THE PUBLISHING HOUSE WHERE YOU'VE BEEN WORKING FOR 10 YEARS. YOU'VE ALWAYS DAY-DREAMED ABOUT BECOMING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER, BUT THERE WAS NEVER A GOOD TIME TO PURSUE THAT DREAM. YOU...**

- a. Know the odds of success in interior design are slim so you just look for another publishing gig.
- b. Realize you love designing as a hobby, but cringe when you think of the expectations you'll have to meet when working with actual paying clients.
- c. Worry about a negative reaction when you announce your decision to colleagues and family.
- d. Don't want to start at the bottom in a new industry. It's safer to stick with what you know.
- e. Are secretly happy you've been laid off. It was the push you needed to take that leap of faith.

**4. YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A SCHOOLTEACHER. DISCOURAGED BY THE STARTING SALARIES, YOU WENT INTO PHARMACEUTICAL SALES INSTEAD. WITH A RECENT INHERITANCE FROM YOUR GREAT AUNT AND YOUR SPOUSE'S NEW PAY RAISE, YOU COULD LIVE JUST FINE ON A SMALLER SALARY. YOU...**

- a. Wonder if you're being irresponsible. What if your spouse loses his job unexpectedly.



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- b. Start looking for teaching jobs right away. You can't believe your good fortune!
- c. Remember the unruly kids in your neighborhood. Can you really manage a bunch of eight-year-olds?
- d. Think, "At least with my sales job, I don't have the pressure of 25 kids relying on me every day."
- e. Don't pursue it because you'll be seen as wishy-washy for making such a dramatic career change.

**5. YOUR BOSS IS IMPRESSED WITH YOUR PERFORMANCE AND RECENTLY ASKED YOU ABOUT YOUR LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS. THE BUZZ AROUND THE OFFICE IS THAT SHE'S ABOUT TO GET A BIG PROMOTION AND YOU HAVE A FEELING SHE'S GOING TO RECOMMEND YOU FOR HER JOB. YOU...**

- a. Are worried you don't know enough to succeed at that job yet. Failing could sabotage your career.
- b. Are irritated that performing well means people are always trying to give you more responsibility.
- c. Think, "What about Jeff and Marci? They have more seniority. This is going to cause quite a stir."
- d. Become paralyzed with fear as you imagine every bad thing that could happen if you mess this up.
- e. Are excited that you might get such a great opportunity. You work hard. You deserve it.

**6. YOU DECLARE TO A FRIEND THAT YOU ARE READY TO MAKE A CAREER CHANGE, BUT YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START. SHE OFFERS TO INTRODUCE YOU TO A CONTACT OF HERS WHO COULD OPEN SOME DOORS. YOU...**

- a. Back down from your declaration. The idea of changing careers is just too overwhelming.
- b. Thank her for her offer. You'll contact the person later today and invite him to lunch.



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- c. Never call the guy. It's a tough job market. It would be better to wait until the economy picks up.
  - d. Feel a knot in your stomach. It's time to step up or shut up. Are you really ready for a change?
  - e. Think, "This man isn't going to take me seriously. I don't have enough experience."
- 7. SINCE MOVING 1,000 MILES AWAY FROM YOUR FAMILY TO LAND YOUR FIRST "REAL" JOB, YOU'VE WANTED TO GET BACK CLOSER TO HOME. YOUR HOMETOWN IS A BIGGER CITY WITH LOTS TO DO. LATELY, YOU'VE BEEN FEELING MORE HOMESICK THAN USUAL, AND IT IS NEGATIVELY AFFECTING HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR JOB. YOU...**
- a. Don't get your hopes up. Your chances of finding a job in your hometown are slim right now.
  - b. Worry your skills might not be as prized in a big city where the competition is much stiffer.
  - c. Imagine your friends and family will think you couldn't make it on your own.
  - d. Think, "Who knows what will happen if I give up the career I've built here? Leaving is a big risk."
  - e. Call everyone you know back home who could help you. Surely, there's a job with your name on it.
- 8. YOUR PARENTS SAVED AND SACRIFICED TO PUT YOU THROUGH COLLEGE AND LAW SCHOOL. NOW, YOU FEEL GUILTY THAT YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR WORK. IT SOUNDED LIKE A GREAT CAREER CHOICE, BUT YOU HAVE NO PASSION FOR IT AND DREAD GETTING UP AND GOING TO YOUR LAW FIRM EVERY DAY. YOU...**
- a. Wish you could pursue a new path, but you enjoy your lifestyle too much to take a pay cut.
  - b. Know it will be upsetting to your family, but you take steps towards a career you are passionate about.
  - c. Make yourself suck it up and work harder. You can do this. Your motto is, "Never ever give up."



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- d. Do just enough to satisfy the higher-ups, but not enough to get saddled with a heavy caseload.
- e. Wouldn't dare tell your parents. They would be so disappointed in you.

**9. YOU WORK FOR A GROWING STARTUP COMPANY. YOUR BOSS GETS FIRED AND YOU'D LOVE TO HAVE HER JOB. YOU FEEL QUITE CONFIDENT YOUR IDEAS AND ENERGY WOULD BE A GREAT ASSET TO THE COMPANY. PROBLEM IS THAT YOUR RESUME DOESN'T SHOW ENOUGH YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO QUALIFY FOR THE POSITION. YOU...**

- a. Don't waste your time applying. You are unlikely to get it anyway.
- b. Think you can do it but have a few doubts. You ask yourself, "Am I really up for this challenge?"
- c. Pretend not to want the job. You don't want to appear presumptuous.
- d. Worry you'll suffer the fate of your boss – getting axed if the company isn't happy with you.
- e. Go to the hiring manager and make a case for why you're the best candidate for the job.

**10. YOUR DOCTOR SUGGESTS YOUR STRING OF RECENT HEALTH CHALLENGES IS DUE TO WORK-RELATED STRESS AND THE LONG HOURS YOU SPEND AT THE OFFICE. SHE "PRESCRIBES" REGULAR VACATION AND A MORE SANE WORK SCHEDULE – BOTH OF WHICH ARE POSSIBLE. SHE EVEN SUGGESTS IT WILL MAKE YOU MORE PRODUCTIVE. YOU...**

- a. Say, "I'll be stressed on vacation thinking about the pile of work waiting on me when I come back."
- b. Agree with your doctor. It's time to make some changes and give yourself a break.
- c. Are afraid if you work less, your performance will suffer. So, you don't change a thing.



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- d. Think, "If I start being more productive in less time, they'll just give me more work."
- e. Ignore the doctor's orders. You won't be seen as a team player if you leave the office by 6 o'clock.

**11. YOU ENJOY YOUR JOB AS AN EDITOR, BUT YOU ALSO DREAM OF BEING A NOVELIST. IT WOULD GIVE YOU SO MUCH MORE SATISFACTION TO FINALLY WRITE THAT BOOK YOU'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT FOR YEARS – AND GET IT PUBLISHED. YOUR BEST FRIEND ASKS YOU OVER LUNCH WHY YOU DON'T GET STARTED NOW. YOU...**

- a. Tell her it's too hard to get a publisher. Why write a book if no one's going to publish it?
- b. Are anxious about putting yourself out there like that – for your work to be scrutinized and critiqued.
- c. Are worried how your employer will feel about you promoting a book. You haven't even asked.
- d. Think, "What if the book really takes off? How will I handle my job, the publicity, the kids?"
- e. Say, "That's a great question. Why don't I get started now?" You start writing this week.

**12. YOU'VE BEEN UNEMPLOYED AND LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB IN THE SAME FIELD FOR FOUR MONTHS NOW. YOU WANT TO ENTER A NEW FIELD OF WORK BUT HAVEN'T GIVEN YOURSELF PERMISSION TO TRY. YOU'RE NOT SURE WHERE TO START. YOU...**

- a. Think, "What if I don't like this new career after all? What if I regret making a change"
- b. Start pursuing jobs in this new field, too. Who knows? You might get exactly what you want.
- c. Decide to stick with what you know. Why risk failure?
- d. Think, "What if I land a job in this new field and they figure out I don't really know what I'm doing?"



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- e. Would rather not face more rejection. It's been hard enough getting "no's" in one field, let alone two.

**13. YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER SUGGESTS YOU MIGHT BE HAPPIER AT WORK IF YOU SPENT LESS TIME WITH THE NEGATIVE GOSSIPS YOU HAVE LUNCH WITH EVERY DAY. THEY SEEM TO SEE THE GLASS AS HALF EMPTY AND IT'S AFFECTING YOUR ATTITUDE. YOU KNOW YOUR SWEETHEART IS RIGHT. YOU...**

- a. Start beating yourself up for wasting so much time being negative. You know better.
- b. Make excuses about why you're not happy and insist your negative co-workers are not to blame.
- c. Fear the social repercussions at work of removing yourself from the clique.
- d. Know he's right, but don't want to give up being "in the know."
- e. Are tired of those energy-draining conversations and make new lunch plans starting tomorrow.

**14. YOUR ANNUAL REVIEW IS COMING UP NEXT WEEK AND YOUR BOSS HAS ASKED EVERYONE TO COME TO THEIR REVIEW WITH ONE IDEA THAT WOULD IMPROVE THEIR PRODUCTIVITY. YOU'D LOVE THE OPTION OF WORKING FROM HOME TWO DAYS A WEEK, BUT NO ONE ELSE IN THE DEPARTMENT CURRENTLY GETS THAT PERK. YOU...**

- a. Are concerned that if you're not physically in the office, you will lose some influence.
- b. Prepare to make your request during your review next week and hope she says "yes."
- c. Are afraid to ask because you don't really trust yourself to get work done with the TV so close by.
- d. Don't like the fact that all eyes will be on you if you are the first person to get this opportunity.
- e. Worry your co-workers will be jealous or your boss will reject your request as selfish.



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**15. YOU'VE WORKED IN A BANK FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS, BUT YOU'RE TIRED OF SITTING BEHIND A DESK ALL DAY. AFTER VOLUNTEERING AT A CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL THE LAST FEW MONTHS, YOU'RE SURPRISED TO DISCOVER WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TO DO - BECOME A NURSE. IT WILL TAKE TWO YEARS OF CLASSES TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. YOU...**

- a. Were not the best student so you're not sure if going back to school is a good idea.
- b. Will have to be engaged in your work every day – lives are at stake. Do you have the energy for that?
- c. Do nothing. You dread dealing with family members who believe change is always bad and stability is always good.
- d. Are afraid working and going to school at the same time will be too overwhelming.
- e. Enroll in courses at a local college, Life's too short not to pursue your dreams!

## ANSWER KEY

Odd Numbers: Mostly "A" responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "C" responses

### Fear of Failure:

You are so afraid of the possibility of failure that you'd rather not even try. You probably learned somewhere along the way to play it safe, but it's time to step out of your comfort zone. It may sound obvious but think about it – when you leave your comfort zone, you will feel uncomfortable. I have found that clients who fear failure often take it very personally. They say, "I'm a failure" rather than "I failed" or "That didn't go so well." Many are perfectionists or procrastinators who want a guarantee of the outcome before they take steps onto a new path. Sound familiar? Give yourself permission to be imperfect. Take baby





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steps by setting small goals to build your confidence. When the question, "What if I fail?" evokes paralyzing fear, answer it. Imagine you've made the decision to pursue the career of your dreams and it doesn't work out. What if that happened? What would you do? By answering your own "what if?" questions, you ease your fear and create a Plan B that can give you the mental clarity and courage to conquer your fear of failure.

**Odd Numbers: Mostly "B" responses**

**Even Numbers: Mostly "D" responses**

## Fear of Success:

You're fairly confident in your abilities, but don't like the pressure of maintaining success once you have it. Success means more responsibility and higher expectations. You may even wonder if you can keep it up. You may feel it's easier to be the big fish in a little pond than to venture into bigger waters. Don't sell yourself short. You are capable of more than you think you are. But you'll never know until you allow yourself to be stretched and challenged. When you do, you'll earn a new level of confidence and experience what it means to really live. Another fear some of my clients in this category experience is one that researchers call the "Imposter Syndrome." And women suffer from it more than men – the feeling that people will find out you're not as great as they think you are. If this is you, beware of how you explain your successes. Rather than brushing your success off to luck or circumstances, give yourself credit for your talent, tenacity and other personal attributes that will lead to success on your new path.



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Odd Numbers: Mostly "C" responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "E" responses

## Fear of Disapproval:

Because you often seek the approval of others before making a change, you get stuck when you don't get that approval or perceive you won't get it. You may also seek validation in things, titles, and money. To move towards the life you really want, you'll need to push past this unhealthy "approval addiction." Make a choice to value your own approval more than others and your authentic self will find the right path. Sometimes this issue manifests as a fear of rejection. You take "no" personally.

Because your dreams require you to ask others for help, you find yourself stuck. Some who fear disapproval also fear they're "not good enough." This translates into statements such as, "I'm not young enough/attractive enough/thin enough/smart enough." Rather than focusing on what you see as weaknesses, focus on your strengths. What are your strengths? Make a list. Your right path will tap into your signature strengths – those innate gifts and abilities that you own, enjoy, and frequently use.

Odd Numbers: Mostly "D" responses

Even Numbers: Mostly "A" responses

## Fear of Losing Control:

You're afraid that if you follow your heart, you'll lose everything – financially, professionally, or even in your relationships. You feel overwhelmed by the prospect of change. For many of my clients, the key to overcoming this fear putting their fears in



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perspective. Is it time for you to do the same? Some whose primary fear is losing control can be categorized as a “catastrophizer,” a psychology term that describes what happens when our thoughts spiral out of control as we imagine the worst-case irrational outcomes for the future. For example, you dream of pursuing your new career, but within seconds imagine yourself living on the streets after you fail miserably. If this describes your thinking pattern, University of Pennsylvania resilience researcher Dr. Karen Reivich suggests interrupting your negative thought spiral by first imagining an equally irrational best-case scenario. For example, you become so amazing at your new job that you get promoted five times in the first year, triple your salary and are profiled in the national media as the poster child for your field. Once you jolt yourself out of your negative spiral by creating a positive spiral, ask yourself, “What’s the most likely scenario?” You likely will not triple your salary or end up on the streets, but you will transition responsibly one step at a time.

**Odd Numbers: Mostly “E” responses**

**Even Numbers: Mostly “B” responses**

## Unstuck and Unstoppable:

Congratulations! You understand an important truth: Everyone feels fear. And you know a key to success is not letting it control you. When you feel fear, you don’t let it stop you. With practice, you’ve developed the courage you need to move forward despite your fears. Your courage and confidence empower you to find the right path for you and stay the course when you encounter bumps on the road.