



FEAR EXPLAINED

Fear of failure leads to mediocrity. Boring is easy, but rarely enough.

Agoraphobia

a.k.a.

FEAR OF SOCIAL MEDIA

“Agoraphobia is a condition where the sufferer becomes anxious in environments that are unfamiliar or where he or she perceives that they have little control. Triggers for this anxiety may include open spaces, crowds (social anxiety), or traveling (even short distances). Agoraphobia is often, but not always, compounded by a fear of social embarrassment, as the agoraphobic fears the onset of a panic attack and appearing distraught in public.”

TEXT: RISTO PAKARINEN

Companies aren't really afraid of social media. Companies aren't afraid of anything. It's the people that run (and make up) companies that are afraid – and not only of social media. Being afraid of throwing yourself in the world of Facebook and Twitter is like suffering from many different phobias. The fear of social media is a mixture of things. Partly, it's like the fear of being in an open space, with no clear places to hide in. Partly, it's the fear of losing control, and partly, it's the common fear of speaking in public.

In the words of American comedian **Jerry Seinfeld**, “According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”

MAYBE NOT. Like the fear of flying, and even agoraphobia, the fear of social media could be more of a symptom than the diagnosis. Being afraid to fly may be related to other fears, just as being afraid of entering certain locations can be a symptom of panic attacks that have been triggered in that particular place previously.

And being afraid is natural, fear is hardwired into our brain to protect us. With no fear, humans would take fatal risks. Evolution has helped us. Those of us with some fear in the brain, and common sense, have been able to reproduce. The fearless ones, they're gone. In flames, with style, but gone.

Although, in a study made with wild monkeys – monkeys are afraid of snakes to the point where they would rather starve to death than face a snake to get food, a sentiment often voiced by those who are anti-Facebook – it was found that monkeys born in captivity didn't have that reaction. They weren't afraid at all.

However, when a researcher showed these monkeys videotape of a wild monkey in panic, the same reaction was triggered in the monkeys born in captivity. The fear for snakes was in their brain, just never triggered.

The good news is that the same method can be used to cure the fear. Footage of a monkey not afraid of a snake helped the others not to be scared.

The fear of social media is the least dangerous or even restrictive of the fears mentioned above, but the same laws apply. Facebook is an open forum where others get to comment on you, and your behavior, in a way that you have almost no control over. You can control a lot of things, but never everything.

In essence, you, and your organization, will stand naked in an open square, speaking to people, about to board a plane. And there's nothing you can do about it, so you might as well take the leap of faith, and trust people.

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THAT'S SCARY. The severity of the fear of the social media seems to

correlate with age because kids don't seem to be afraid of the Facebook, or Twitter, or Flickr, or any other place where you out yourself. Kids let it all hang out. Kids share everything with the world. Kids swear by transparency, because like monkeys that have never seen a snake, they're not afraid of something they've never been exposed to.

Yes, on the Internet, some people will make comments about you that you don't like, and not everybody is in love with your new slogan or your deals. There's no way you can control the conversation. Then again, you never could control the conversation at water coolers, either.

You just didn't know about it.

It's OK to be afraid. But it's a shame if it stops you from having fun. Acknowledging the fear is the first step to a witty status update and a lively network on Facebook.



SEE JERRY SEINFELD YOURSELF
“Jerry Seinfeld:
I'm telling you for the last time”