



## Fear Dynamics: Harnessing Fear and Anxiety to Create Lasting Happiness and Meaningful Achievement

**Stephen J. Dietrich**

Amplify Publishing

(241pp)

978-1-63755-973-4

*Using a poignant personal story to proffer general advice regarding overcoming trauma-based fear, Fear Dynamics is a hopeful self-help text.*

Stephen J. Dietrich's self-help book *Fear Dynamics* is about being aware of how trauma from past abuses affects one's everyday relationships.

Dietrich, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, writes that trauma is relived in everyday situations. However, his book also imparts hope that such emotions can be managed. From his family's perfect appearance—which belied the realities of the abuses occurring in their home—onward, his own story is used to illustrate this notion, with each personal story becoming an opportunity to garner insights and proffer general advice for overcoming fear.

Dietrich notes that he once avoided those around him, even calling to his coworker across their cubicles rather than going to speak with her in person. Once he learned to work past such social anxieties, he says, his professional and personal relationships improved. And the emotions and behaviors that followed from his early traumatic experiences, he notes, were also alleviated in time thanks to intensive therapy that involved confronting his past. Intimate revelations regarding mistakes within Dietrich's marriage and regarding prior, less successful therapy work flesh his arguments out further.

The text progresses in chronological order through Dietrich's story, introducing its guidance in tandem with its corresponding appearance in his own life; this progression may not be replicable in the lives of others. Still, the book's advice is compelling. Self-acceptance is touted as imperative to authentic self-betterment; without truthful understanding of where one is in the present, the book suggests, any "progress" made is based on lies. The text advises honoring the emotions of one's inner child and recording and sorting through those feelings. There's everyday guidance for maintaining eye contact with people, slowing down in conversation and with one's responses, and examining the sources of one's fear. Building mutual respect, rather than issuing noncommittal responses out of fear, is also encouraged.

Some of the book's analyses of fear dynamics within the workplace and society allude to larger oppressive structures; the pressure of being a "breadwinner" is mentioned, for example, though not dissected in terms of socialized gender norms. The text also works to dismantle the professional versus personal dichotomy to promote healthy living, for example introducing "Duck Syndrome"—when people hide behind a public persona of effortlessness to hide their hardships—in tandem with its analyses of how trauma manifests in professional situations. The book's musings on the potential for neuroplasticity are also hopeful.

A self-help book that leads by example, *Fear Dynamics* shares advice for pursuing self-actualization beyond one's trauma-induced anxiety.

ALEENA ORTIZ (June 4, 2024)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*