


# The Power of Fear in the Workplace.

Jacqueline Wales



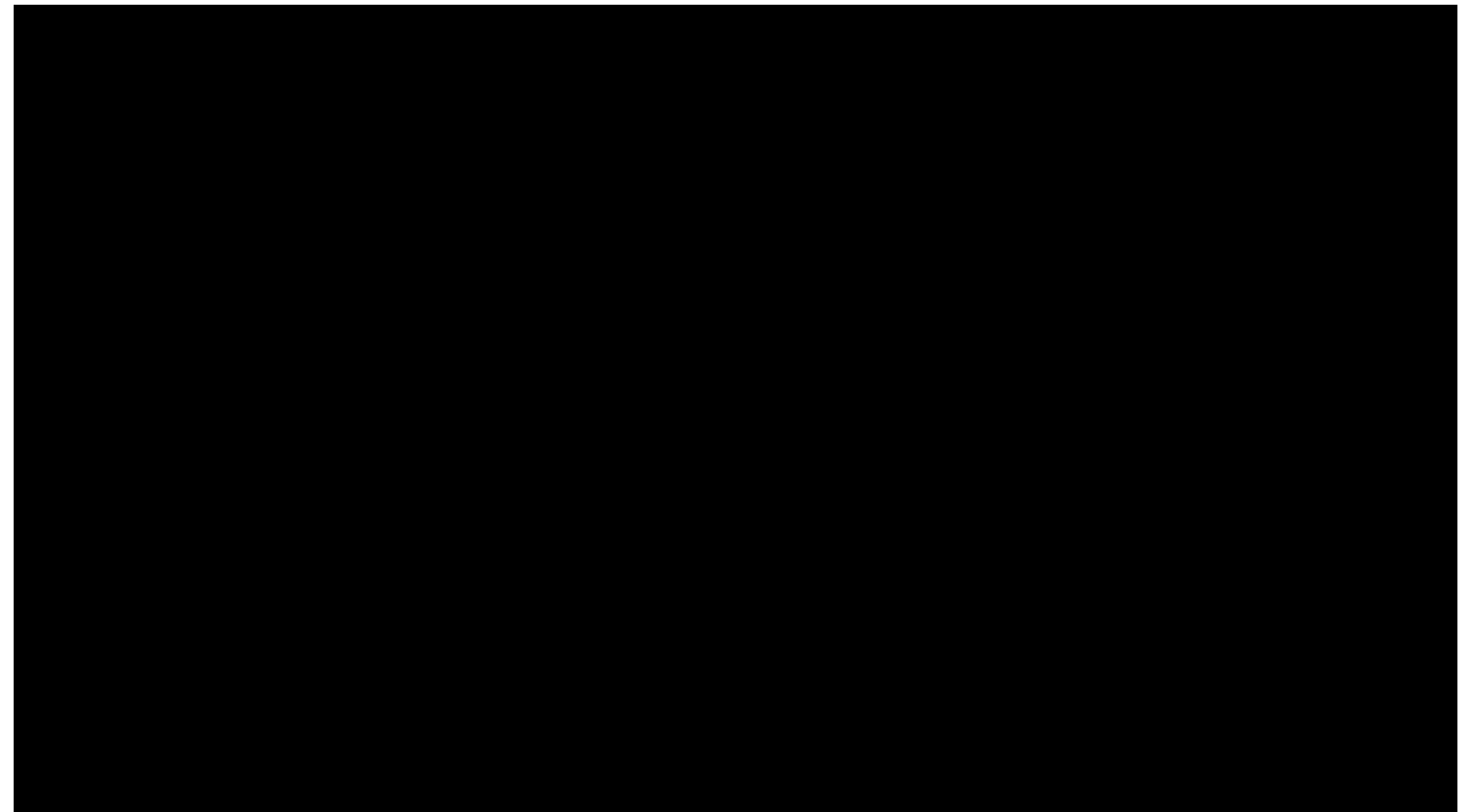
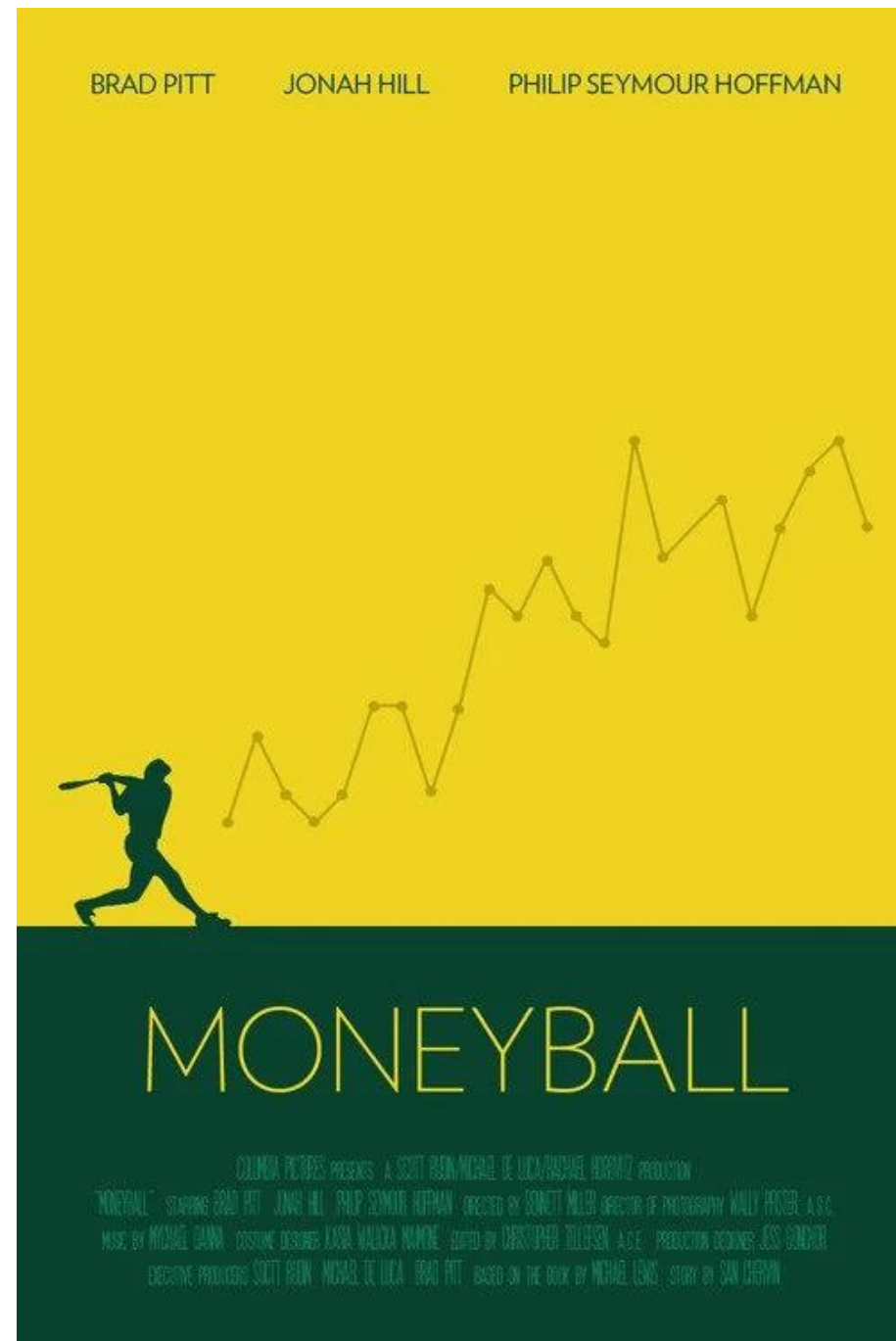




Courage is one step  
ahead of fear

# Agenda

1. What You Can Expect!
  2. Why Fear is Essential to Growth
  3. How to Identify Fear-Based Behavior
  4. How to Make Fear Work For You!
-



# Moneyball – “Biggest Fears”



# How I learned to **LOVE** Fear?





**LOSS  
HUMILIATION  
ABANDONMENT  
REJECTION  
FAILURE/SUCCESS**



# Why Do We Fear?

Fear is a natural, essential response designed to help us survive.

Fear is imagination based.

**Fear is the stories we tell ourselves.**

Fear is a conditioned response.







# What Do YOU Fear?

**Identifying Personal Fears and Their  
Influence on Daily Decisions.**

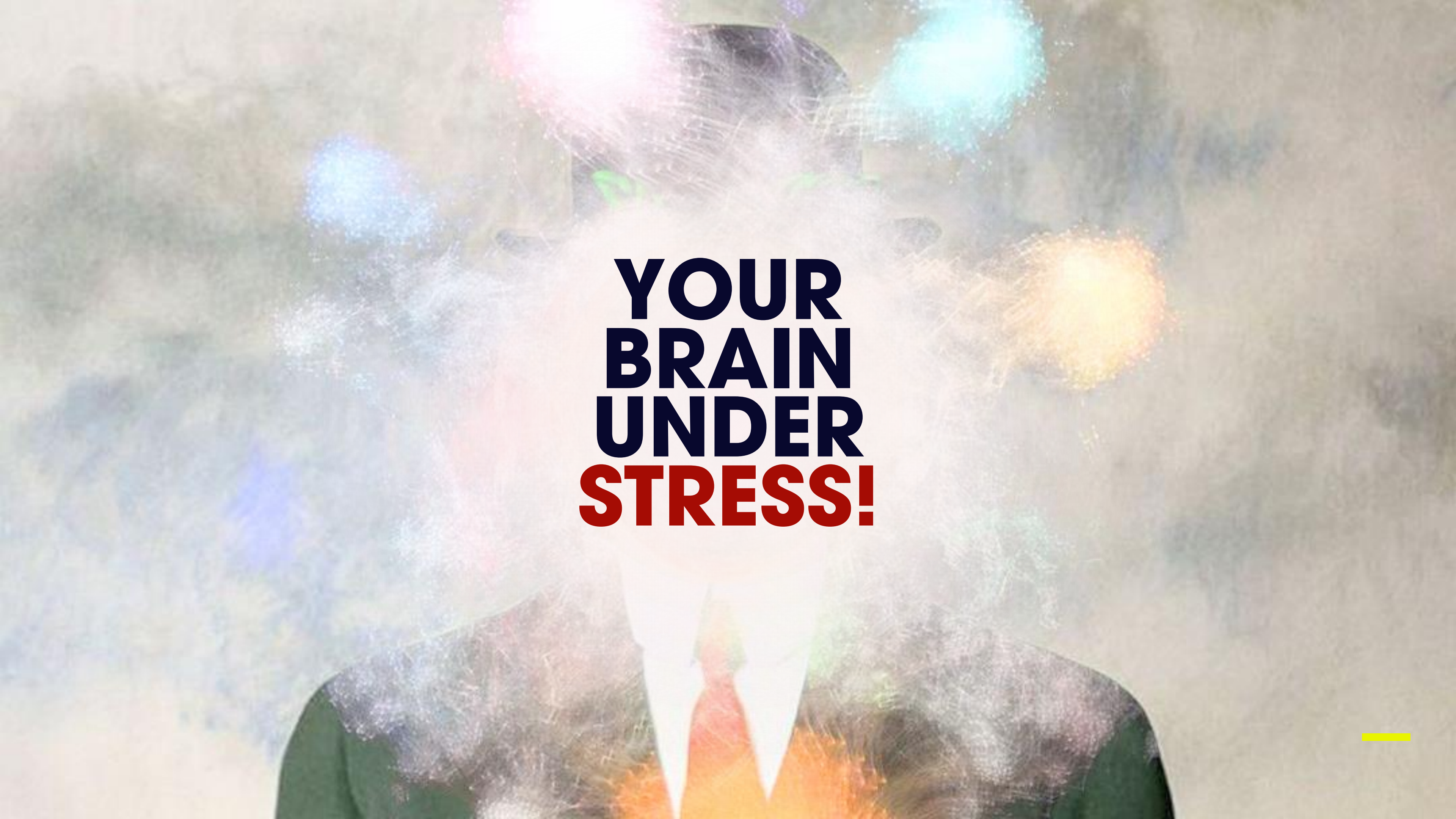
Exercise 5 mins



# Discuss





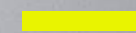
A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and orange tie is shown from the chest up. His head is surrounded by a soft, ethereal glow of various colors including blue, green, yellow, and red, suggesting a state of intense focus or stress. The background is a neutral, light gray.

# **YOUR BRAIN UNDER STRESS!**





**Your only**  
**LIMIT**  
**is your MIND**





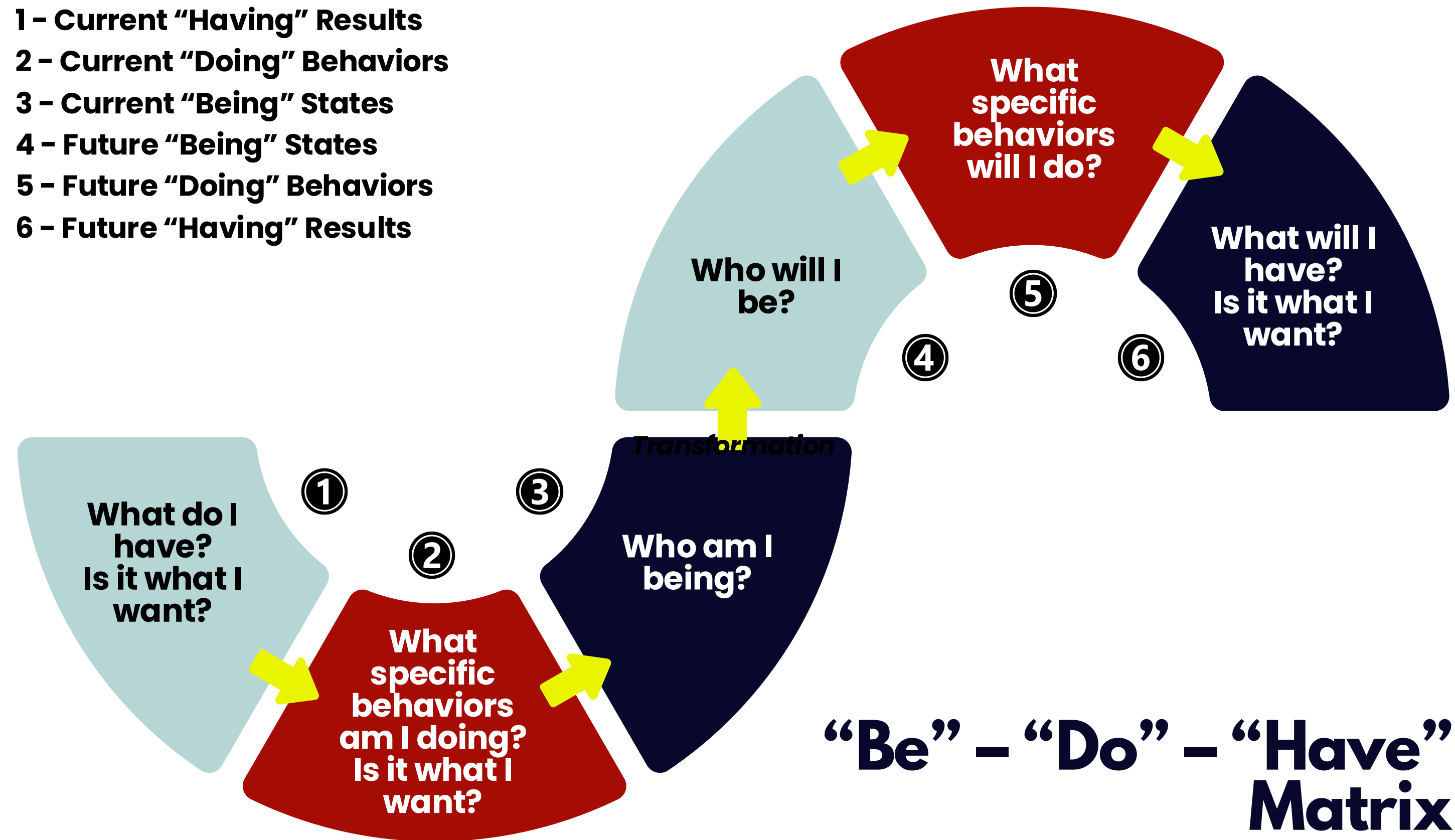
**Fear is a REACTION**  
**COURAGE is a**  
**decision.**

# Transforming FEAR Model

“Be” – “Do” – “Have”  
Matrix



- 1 – Current “Having” Results
- 2 – Current “Doing” Behaviors
- 3 – Current “Being” States
- 4 – Future “Being” States
- 5 – Future “Doing” Behaviors
- 6 – Future “Having” Results





# Current State

## Who Am I BEING?

- Operating from fear-based mindset
- Reactive to perceived threats
- Self-protective and risk-averse
- Dwelling in self-doubt
- Assuming worst-case scenarios
- Seeking absolute certainty

## What Specific Behaviors Am I DOING?

- Avoiding challenging situations
- Procrastinating on important decisions
- Overanalysis leading to paralysis
- Seeking excessive validation
- Creating elaborate "what-if" scenarios
- Defaulting to familiar but limiting patterns

## What Do I HAVE? Is It What I Want?

- Limited professional growth
- Missed opportunities
- Strained relationships due to fear responses
- Unfulfilled potential
- Persistent anxiety about the future
- Reduced leadership effectiveness



# Future State

## Who Will I BE?

- Operating from a growth mindset
- Responsive and thoughtful
- Confidently vulnerable
- Trusting in capabilities
- Embracing uncertainty as opportunity
- Accepting imperfect action

## What Specific Behaviors Will I DO?

- Taking calculated risks
- Making timely decisions with available information
- Setting and pursuing stretch goals
- Seeking feedback for growth
- Creating action plans with contingencies
- Practicing new behaviors outside comfort zone

## What Will I HAVE? Is This What I Want?

- Increased professional growth
- New opportunities pursued
- Improved relationships through proactive responses
- Fulfilled potential
- Reduced anxiety about the future
- Enhanced leadership effectiveness



## Transformational Strategies

## Processing Change

## Measurement Criteria

### Mindset Shifts

- From **"What if I Fail?"** to **"What if I Succeed?"**
- From **"I'm not ready"** to **"I'm learning as I go"**
- From **"This is threatening"** to **"This is challenging"**
- From **"I need certainty"** to **"I can handle uncertainty"**

### Action Steps

1. Start with small, manageable challenges to build confidence
2. Document fear responses and examine their validity
3. Develop specific contingency plans for worst-case scenarios
4. Practice decision-making with incomplete information
5. Seek feedback and support from trusted advisors
6. Celebrate progress and learning from setbacks

### How Successful Will I Be?

- Number of new initiatives undertaken
- Reduction in decision-making time
- Increased comfort with uncertainty
- Improved relationship quality
- Enhanced leadership effectiveness
- Achievement of stretch goals

**Transforming Fear Model**





# The Leadership **Blindspot** Experience



# Takeaways





# **5** Minute Break



# HOW FEAR IMPACTS YOUR EMPLOYEES







**In 2024 employee engagement dropped to 31%. The lowest in 11 years.**

**6 out of 10 employees feel they are treated disrespectfully at work.**

**63% of employees would switch companies for better leadership even if there was no pay raise.**

**87% of employers believe that their organisation currently demonstrates care and respect for their employees.**

*Gallup Research  
2025*





**MICRO-MANAGEMENT**  
**POOR DECISION-MAKING**  
**COMMAND AND CONTROL**  
**BLAME**  
**JUDGMENT**  
**LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY**  
**POOR COMMUNICATION**  
**LACK OF TRANSPARENCY**  
**CONFUSION**  
**RETRIBUTION**  
**ASSUMPTIONS**





**Burned Out!**  
**Disrespected!**  
**Blamed!**  
**Shamed!**  
**Humiliated!**  
**Undervalued!**  
**Rejected!**  
**Disengaged!**  
**Misunderstood!**  
**Judged!**  
**And pissed off!**



**WHAT DO  
EMPLOYEES  
FEEL?**

# EXERCISE

## WHAT DOES FEAR **COST** YOU?

**LACK OF  
TRUST**

**LOSS OF  
TALENT**

**ABSENTEEISM**

**INCREASED  
STRESS**

**LOSS OF  
TALENT**

**LOW  
MORALE**

**44 BILLION IN LOST REVENUE ANNUALLY!**





# **NO ONE LIKES LOSING MONEY OR TALENTED EMPLOYEES?**

- **KNOWLEDGE LOSS**
- **PRODUCTIVITY**
- **CLIENT TRUST**
- **RECRUITMENT  
COST**
- **BAD DECISIONS**

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has reported that toxic workplace cultures cost U.S. companies approximately \$223 billion over five years due to high turnover and disengaged employees





# **8** Minute Break





Case Study

**Case Study Exercise**



# Implementing Strategies for Success

## **Pair Experienced Mentors**

Match seasoned employees with new hires to share institutional knowledge and best practices.

## **Navigate Challenges**

Leverage mentors' expertise to help new employees overcome obstacles and learn from setbacks.

## **Collaborative Learning**

Encourage ongoing communication to open dialogue, feedback, and knowledge sharing between mentors and mentees.

## **Accelerate Onboarding**

Reduce ramp-up time for new hires by providing personalized guidance and support.

## **Cultivate Future Leaders**

Groom high-potential employees for leadership roles through personal development programs and mentorship.

## **Enhance Engagement**

Boost morale and retention by investing in the professional development of your workforce.



# Managing **Emotions** in the Workplace

Understanding and managing emotions is crucial for workplace success and well-being.

## **Growth-Related**

- Anticipation
- Excitement
- Pride

## **Challenge-Related**

- Anxiety
- Frustration/Disrespect
- Uncertainty/Fear

**These emotions can significantly impact workplace dynamics, decision-making, performance, and well-being.**

## **Recognition**

Identify and acknowledge emotions as they arise.

## **Response**

Develop healthy coping mechanisms to manage emotions as they arise.

## **Growth**

Transform emotional challenges into opportunities for personal and professional growth.

# Coaching for Resilience

1

Assess individual and team stress levels and perceived challenges.

2

Facilitate small group coaching sessions to build emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills.

3

Encourage open dialogue and peer-to-peer support within the coaching groups.

4

Teach techniques for managing anxiety, improving focus, and maintaining a positive mindset.

5

Empower team members to take ownership of their personal and professional growth.

6

Foster a culture of resilience, collaboration, and continuous improvement.





## **Better Problem Solving - Greater Empathy - Stronger Relationships - Successful Outcomes**

By understanding the profound influence of emotions like fear, shame, and the need for trust, professionals can develop greater self-awareness and strategies to overcome these barriers to success.



# Steps To Create A **Psychologically Safe** Environment to Have Greater Impact on **Performance and Innovation**

- 1 Understand and create a psychologically safe environment and their benefits.
  - 2 Foster trust, open communication, and a culture of authenticity within the team.
  - 3 Confront personal fears and lead with empathy and transparency.
  - 4 Create environments where employees feel safe to innovate and perform at their highest potential.
  - 5 Cultivate a high-performance and innovative culture that drives organizational success and enhances workforce engagement.
-



**FEAR AS A  
MOTIVATOR...**

**Not a  
Deterrent**







“

You cannot change how someone thinks, but you can give them a tool, the use of which leads them to think differently.

**Buckminster Fuller**





# Takeaways



# Key Takeaways

## FOSTER A LEARNING Culture: The Executive Edge

### Why It Matters

- 3x higher employee retention
- 40% faster market adaptation
- Clear competitive advantage

### CEO Action Step

Start today: Share your biggest  
lesson  
learned this quarter





# FEAR OF FAILURE → Team Success

## Why It Matters

- 35% increase in innovation output
- Better talent retention
- Faster market response

## CEO Action Step

Replace "post-mortems" with "project learnings" Include success and setback stories in leadership communications





# NAVIGATING Unexpected Challenges

## Why It Matters

- 45% faster problem resolution
- Improved team resilience
- Reduced crisis impact

## CEO Action Step

Institute "No Surprise Rule": Reward early problem reporting Lead monthly cross-team solution sessions.







# **UNCERTAINTY → CLEAR Communication**

## **Why It Matters**

- 50% reduction in project delays
- Higher employee engagement
- Better strategy execution

## **CEO Action Step**

15-minute weekly company-wide updates. Share both victories and challenges openly

# BUILDING PSYCHOLOGICAL Safety

## Why It Matters

- 60% increase in problem identification
- Better quality decisions
- Enhanced innovation pipeline

## CEO Action Step

Start meetings with "What's not working?"

Publicly acknowledge your own mistakes





# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE in Leadership

## Why It Matters

- 40% better team performance
- Stronger client relationships
- Higher employee satisfaction

## CEO Action Step

Begin executive meetings with team pulse check  
Make empathy a promoted leadership trait.



# **THE FEARLESS Advantage Business Impact**

- Faster market adaptation
- Higher profitability
- Industry leadership position
- Greater engagement across all dimensions of the organization

## **Next Step**

Pick one slide. Implement one action.  
Measure results in 30 days.





# SUCCESS FACTORS

## LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

- Active participation across all dimensions of the organization
- Visible modeling from senior leaders and management
- Resource allocation toward learning and development
- Consistent and clear communication
- Progress championing with all employees

## SYSTEM SUPPORT

- Clear metrics
- Regular feedback during 1:1's
- Recognition programs that celebrate the wins
- Clarity in expectations
- Time allocation to implement changes

## CULTURAL INTEGRATION

- Value alignment with company mission and vision
- Behavior standards that are clearly expressed
- Practice reinforcement to help those who are still learning
- Success sharing to create a sense of value and respect
- Challenge resolution to stop toxic behavior

# CONCLUSION



Fear is the greatest driver for success in the human experience but first ... you must find your courage!

**Jacqueline Wales**



# Takeaway s





Your feedback is important to everyone in the Vistage community. Please take a moment to share your feedback about today's session.







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