


Overcoming Fear

“Fear kills more dreams than failure ever will.” – Suzy Kassem

 Warm up

- What do you think the quote means? Do you agree?
- Which is worse in your opinion: failing, or never trying because of fear? Why?
- Can you think of a time when fear stopped you from doing something?
- At work or in school, what situations make people most nervous or afraid?
- Do you think successful people are braver, better prepared, or just luckier?
- In business, is it smart to take risks, or is it better to play it safe?
- How can fear sometimes *help* performance (e.g. in presentations, deadlines)?
- If you had no fear of failure, what new project or idea would you try right now?



 1. How stressful is it? Rate how stressful each situation is (1 = not stressful, 10 = extremely stressful), then compare your answers with a partner.

Receiving tough feedback from a teacher/boss in front of others.	
Speaking in public at a big event or presentation.	
Starting a new job or a new class with no clear guidance.	
Working in a team with people you've never met before.	
Being asked a difficult question in a meeting or class and not knowing the answer.	
Negotiating in English with a demanding client/teacher.	
Dealing with a disagreement between colleagues about how to complete a task.	
Asking for more time on a deadline or assignment.	
Making a mistake in front of your peers during an important task.	

- Which situation stresses you the most, and why?
- Which situations could be improved with preparation, and which are more about stepping out of your comfort zone?



2. Match the words to their meanings. You will use these words throughout the worksheet.

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|---------------------------|---|
| a. mindset 7 | 1. Possibility of loss or danger. |
| b. composure 3 | 2. Creating a picture in your mind of a future situation. |
| c. preparation 5 | 3. Staying calm. |
| d. visualisation 2 | 4. A set sequence of actions that you repeat. |
| e. mastery 6 | 5. Careful planning. |
| f. confidence 8 | 6. Complete skill or control |
| g. routine 4 | 7. Attitude or way of thinking. |
| h. risk 1 | 8. Belief in your ability. |



3. Fill in the blanks with the correct vocabulary from exercise 2.

- Success without *preparation* usually depends on luck, not skill.
- A professional's *composure* is tested most when things go wrong in front of others.
- Great coaches know how to build a positive team *mindset* before competition.
- Top performers often use *visualisation* to stay focused and calm under pressure.
- Achieving real *mastery* in any field takes years of practice and discipline.
- Every successful person has a daily *routine* that helps them stay consistent.
- Taking on new challenges always involves some *risk* especially when the outcome is uncertain.
- The best decisions come from a mix of *confidence* and careful analysis.



4. Discuss in pairs or small groups.

- Do you agree with the statements in exercise 3?
- What helps you keep your composure in stressful situations?
- Do you think visualisation really helps before big challenges?
- When making an important decision, which matters more to you: confidence, preparation, or instinct?



5. Read the text and answer the following questions.

"I Thought I Could Wing It"

I used to believe I didn't need much preparation. I thought I was smart, quick on my feet, and maybe even a little charming. Why waste hours rehearsing when I could just walk in, smile, and improvise?

That attitude worked for small meetings. It worked for school presentations. But then came the big test: a pitch to senior managers.

At first, I felt relaxed. I spoke confidently, cracked a joke, and thought I had them on my side. But then the questions started.

"Where's the data to back this up?"

"What are the risks if this fails?"

"Have you tested this with real clients?"

I had no answers. My smile disappeared. My voice shook. I lost my composure, and everyone in the room could see it.

Walking out, I felt humiliated. I kept on thinking: *I should have prepared more. I could have asked colleagues for tough questions in advance. If I had done the work, I would have looked professional instead of foolish.*

That day was painful, but it was also my wake-up call.

Since then, my mindset has completely changed. I built a strict routine: research everything, practice difficult questions, and use visualisation to see myself staying calm under pressure. Slowly, I developed real confidence, the kind that comes from being ready, not lucky.

Now, when I walk into a presentation, I still feel some risk and some fear. But I know this: if you prepare properly, fear doesn't destroy you. It sharpens you. And nothing feels better than winning the room because you actually earned it.

- Why did the speaker think he could "wing it"? *Because he believed he was smart, quick, and charming, so he thought he could improvise without much preparation.*
- What happened when the managers started asking questions? *He couldn't answer them, lost his confidence and composure, and felt embarrassed in front of everyone.*
- What did the speaker realise afterwards? *He realised he should have prepared more and asked colleagues for possible questions in advance.*
- How did their routine and mindset change? *He started researching carefully, practicing difficult questions, using visualisation to stay calm, and building real confidence through preparation.*
- Which do you think is most important for a successful presentation: charm, confidence, or preparation? Why?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you had to wing it? What happened?



Talking About Regret and Missed Chances

We use *should have* / *could have* / *would have* to talk about the past differently. They don't describe what really happened. Instead, they show what was the right thing, what was possible, or what we imagine.

Should have + past participle

Used to say the right action in the past, or to express regret.

- I should have prepared more. (But I didn't.)
- I shouldn't have spoken without checking the facts.

Could have + past participle

Used to say something was possible, but it didn't happen.

- I could have rehearsed with my colleagues. (But I didn't.)
- We couldn't have finished without extra support.

Would have + past participle

Often used with "if." Describes an unreal past result.

- If I had prepared, I would have looked confident.
- If he had stayed calm, he wouldn't have lost the client.

💡 In spoken English, *should have*, *could have* and *would have* are often contracted to *should've*, *could've*, and *would've*. In informal speech, they can sound like "shoulda," "coulda," and "woulda." If I had prepared, I would have done better. = Imagining a different past.



6. Write 3–4 sentences using *should have* / *could have* / *would have* to talk about regrets or missed chances from your past (school, work, or daily life).

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7. Watch the [video](#)¹ “How I climbed a 3,000-foot vertical cliff - without ropes” – Alex Honnold (TED Talk). If your class time is limited, watch Part 1 (0:00–7:10) in class and Part 2 (7:11–end) for homework.

Part 1 – Watch and Discuss (0:00–7:10)

- What made Alex want to climb El Capitan without a rope? *He saw it as the ultimate challenge and a chance to achieve true mastery in his sport. He wanted to test himself mentally and physically, not rely on luck but do it perfectly and with full control.*
- Why did his first big climb (Half Dome) feel disappointing, even though it was a success? *He felt unprepared and scared during the climb. Even though he reached the top, he felt like he'd been lucky, not skilled – he “got away with it” instead of performing with confidence and mastery.*
- What emotions did he experience during that climb? *He felt panic, fear, doubt, and anxiety, especially when he wasn't sure of his route or didn't trust a foothold. He struggled to stay calm and composed.*
- What does he say about fear and control? He explains that fear can be managed through preparation, practice, and visualisation. By rehearsing every move until it felt automatic, he could stay calm and in control even in dangerous situations.
- What do you think he means by “I didn't want to get away with something, I wanted to be great”? *He means he didn't want his success to depend on luck or chance. He wanted to perform at the highest level through skill, preparation, and mastery, not survival.*
- What do you think he'll explain next about mindset and preparation?

Prediction: How do you think he'll overcome fear and prepare for El Capitan in the second half of the talk?

Part 2 – Listen and Complete (7:11–end)

- Most climbers take *three to five days* to reach the top of El Capitan. (*time period*)
- Alex says he had climbed El Cap about *50* times with a rope before his solo. (*number*)
- He used *visualisation* to imagine every move and remove doubt. (*noun*)
- He compared the climb to a *choreographed dance* thousands of feet up. (*noun phrase*)
- He stretched every night for a *year* to make sure he could reach one key hold. (*time period*)
- The climb took him *three* hours and 56 minutes to finish. (*number*)
- He says that time it felt like a *celebration* not a struggle. (*noun*)

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iM6M_7wBMc



8. Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Do you think fear can ever be useful or healthy? In what way?

How does Alex's process compare to how professionals (or students) prepare for big challenges in work, school, or life?

Can you think of a situation where over-preparation might actually hurt performance?

Do you agree that true confidence only comes from mastery? Why or why not?

What did you personally take away from the talk? Did you find it inspiring? If so, why?

Do you think anyone can train themselves to stay calm under extreme pressure, or is that a personality trait?



9. Homework: Write about a fear you've faced or a challenge you'd like to overcome. Explain what made it difficult, how you reacted, and what you *could have* or *should have* done differently. (Write about 200 words.)