Fear as a Self Defense Enhancer

Introduction

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, fear is an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger.

Even though fear as an emotion may be unpleasant, managing it in the face of possible danger will help you in self defense.

In this unit, we will be learning how to manage fear to aid self defense.

Introduction

Many survivors of violence reported having a bad feeling such a discomfort or in extreme cases, fear.

Fear is a reaction in response to a possible threat or danger. As a survival mechanism, fear produces signals important for our safety.

Though an emotional reaction, it is accompanied with a lot of physical reactions. These reactions affect different parts of the body

Fear, if not properly managed can make individuals to respond in ways that will further endanger them or unnecessarily harm others.

Want to make this into a canva

What stimulates Fear

Fear can be stimulated by

1. What we feel e.g. touch of a strong rough hand suddenly grabbing an individual
2. What we see e.g. the sight of a car approaching at top speed.
3. What we hear e.g. the sound of a gunshot or bomb explosion.
4. What we remember e.g. an unpleasant event in the past.

How the body reacts to fear

The response to fear in most people is the same, irrespective of the source or stimulus.

The signal that there is a threat or a dangerous situation is transferred to the amygdala, a part of the brain situated at the lower part of the brain.

Reaction to fear is activated in the amygdala.

The hippocampus, a part of the brain close to the amygdala helps the brain to decide whether the perceived danger or threat is real.

How the body reacts to fear

- If the brain rationally interprets the stimulus as real danger, the body then reacts to the danger.
- If the brain interprets it as not dangerous (discover a sudden noise is fireworks and not explosive), the body returns back to its normal state and calms down.
- The reaction of the body to fear may be seen by your physiological or physical response

Biochemical reactions to fear

- Secretion of adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) into the blood.
- Secretion of adrenaline and other catecholamines in preparation for action
- Release of cortisol in response to ACTH
- Conversion of fatty acids into energy, ready for the muscles to use, should the need arise.

Some immediate reactions to fear

- Increased peripheral blood flow to muscles of the body (including the legs
- Increased flow of blood to vital organs to supply them with oxygen and nutrients
- Spike in blood glucose levels to provide energy
- Increased levels white blood cells and calcium in the bloodstream

Physical Symptoms of Fear

- Fast heartbeat
- Fast breathing
- Dry mouth
- Abdominal disturbance (butterflies)
- Chest pain
- Shudders
- Teary eyes
- Excessive sweating
- Goose bumps
- Trembling
- In ability to move

Psychological symptoms of fear

- Overwhelming grief
- Hopelessness
- Feeling of incapacitation
- Looming death
- Excessive emotions (crying, laughing, screaming)

Some positive effects of fear

- Increased strength
- Focused energy.
- Increased pain threshold
- Ability to for daring actions and decisions (e.g. jumping over a fence to escape)

How to make the best of your fears

To reduce the likelihood of getting hurt when confronted with a threat or danger, remember the following are things that we can do in the midst of fear

1. Quickly re assess the situation to determine if you should remain in the flight-fight mode or return to “all clear signal”.
2. See fear as a tool to get to safety; don’t ignore the fear stimulus.
3. Take action immediately; either Flight, Fight or Freeze
4. Remember your body is ready to get you to safety and do what you have to do.

- Fear can have positive and negative consequences depending on how you respond to it in the face of danger or threat.