

## FEAR NOT

**Karen Martin**



For me, subtraction is about uncluttering, removing the obstacles, and letting go of burdens that stand between the way things are and the way you want them to be in the future. I've come to realize that before you can remove any burden you carry, you need to let go of why you're carrying it in the first place: fear.

Rational fear is a good thing, as it alerts us to potential danger. But irrational fear is a different beast. It's what causes us to hold on to burdens we should really remove. When I reflect on the accomplishments that I'm most proud of, removing fear was always step one. The best example I have is when I decided to leave my job and launch my own business in the middle of a promotion to vice president.

I had always dreamed of running my own business. But each time I got close to making the leap, the fear of jumping into deep water kept me on the ship. Could I make it financially? Why leave the great compensation and big title behind? On the surface, all my questions revolved around money and prestige. Or did they?

On the Friday afternoon before the Monday I was to start, I met with my boss, the COO, to finalize everything. I left the meeting feeling empty instead of elated, which puzzled me. I liked my job, team, and leadership. But something wasn't right. I knew what I had to do to sort out my conflicted feelings: deep reflection.

That weekend was the most difficult and most profound I've ever had. I closed my blinds and turned off the phone. I thought and thought and then thought some more. And I *felt*. The more I imagined life as a solo consultant, the more excited I got. And then at noon on Sunday, it finally hit me. My fear wasn't about money and title per se; it was how I had come to view money and title as the very definition of success. This aha moment was the most liberating experience I've ever had. The moment I gained clarity about my fear, it lost all its power.

On Monday morning, I resigned. Saying good-bye wasn't easy. I had been the first employee hired, and I had put my heart and soul into that company. And now I was taking them back.

Nineteen years later, the warning our COO gave me—"you'll hate consulting"—hasn't panned out. Quite the opposite. Subtracting fear from the equation opened up a wonderful world of possibilities that keeps getting better.

I can now smell fear. And I can help others let go of the clutter that holds them back.

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