



Conquering Fear: Living Boldly in an Uncertain World

By Harold S. Kushner

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From the best-selling author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, an illuminating book about fear—and what we can do to overcome it.

An inescapable component of our lives, fear comes in many guises. In uncertain times, coping with these fears can be especially challenging, but in this indispensable book, Harold S. Kushner teaches us to confront, master, and even embrace fear for a more fulfilling life. Drawing on the teachings of religious and secular literature and on the true stories of people who have faced their fears, we are again inspired by Kushner's wisdom, at once deeply spiritual and eminently practical.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A Q&A with **Harold S. Kushner**

Question: You have written about so many of the issues that every one of us will confront at some point in life--loss, grief, disappointment. When and why did you decide to write a book about fear?



Harold S. Kushner: For some time, I've been meeting people who are less happy than they have a right to be because they are afraid--afraid of losing their job, afraid that something will happen to someone in their family, afraid of another terrorist attack. You can't enjoy life when you feel that way. Now, I can't guarantee that none of those things will happen, but I think I can show people how to live with those concerns but not let them drain the joy from their lives.

Question: You began working on this book before the events of this past year and the collapse of the economy. Certainly these are times in which people are more fearful than ever and face new challenges in their daily lives. Do you think the nature of our fears has changed, or that these times just magnify the fears we already had?

Harold S. Kushner: More than anything else, we've always worried about something terrible happening to us or to our world. What has changed is, with improved communication and 24-hour news channels, we hear about more of such things happening somewhere, not necessarily anywhere close to us, and we worry. As one doctor put it, "anthrax is not contagious, but fear of anthrax is." And of course with what has been happening with the economy, we have more things to worry about. People are worried about losing their jobs, losing their homes, losing their retirement savings. I worry that there is a tipping point beyond which we find ourselves worried about so many things that it virtually changes our personality. We become fearful, timid, helpless people, afraid of trying anything or doing anything at all.

Question: Your book is titled *Conquering Fear*--not *accepting fear* or *overcoming fear* or *coping with fear*. Why did you choose that very powerful word for your title?

Harold S. Kushner: If it were easy to lower our level of apprehension, we would all do it. But I don't think it should be our goal to eliminate fear. There are things we should be afraid of--crime, dangers to our health, people looking to cheat us. It would be foolhardy to go through life so confident that nothing bad will ever happen to us because we're good people. But there is a crucial difference between concern which is good and fear which can be debilitating. We don't want to let our lives be defined by the things we're afraid of. I remember the Israeli man whose daughter was badly burned in a terrorist incident, saying "there are worse things in life than dying, and one of them is to live every minute of your life in fear." Our goal should be to

make fear our servant rather than our master.

Question: You write, "I resolve not to let my fears of what might happen prevent me from anticipating with pleasure what I hope will happen." How are fear and hope linked?

Harold S. Kushner: Both are ways of anticipating a future that hasn't happened yet. One of them, fear, anticipates the worst happening; the other, hope, looks forward to something better. It seems to me that anticipating the worst is likely to paralyze and discourage us, leaving us feeling helpless, while envisioning the more favorable outcome may give us the psychological energy to do the things we have to do to bring it about.

Question: We know what fear does to us emotionally, but what does fear do to us physically?

Harold S. Kushner: What affects us emotionally will inevitably have physical consequences. Stress makes us tense. We don't sleep as well, we feel tired and we are tempted to overeat. We focus more on ourselves and distance ourselves from other people. We are prone to misunderstand other people's words and actions.

Question: What made you decide to devote a chapter to fear of rapid change?

Harold S. Kushner: As a man in late middle age, I feel the effect of having been left behind by the rate of change in society every time I have to ask my grandson to program my cell phone or straighten out my computer. I'm not embarrassed to ask for help, but I would be more comfortable in a world where knowledge flowed from older people to younger ones rather than the other way around. I'm also concerned that the sense of disorientation so many people feel at the unprecedented rate of change is feeding into the rise of intolerance and religious fundamentalism and resistance to necessary changes in religion and society.

From Publishers Weekly

Soon after his international bestseller *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* appeared in 1981, Kushner stopped being a congregational rabbi in order to devote full-time to writing and lecturing. *Conquering Fear*, his 12th book, is the latest result of this concentration. It is a popular theology primer designed to help readers grapple with common problems of suffering, significance, disappointments, guilt, forgiveness and conscience. Although traditional Jews object to Kushner's view of suffering as reflecting God's limited capacity to control the hazards of life, his books have won general acclaim. The fears that Kushner tackles include terrorism, natural disasters, rejection, growing old and death, among others. His recommendations for coping require trust, religion, hope, courage, faith; he also urges living with purpose and differentiating between God and nature. Some readers may find Kushner's prescriptions to be inspiring; others will see them as banal platitudes. A useful idea he offers about fear of terrorism is be alert but not frightened, vigilant but not paranoid. Perhaps his least helpful advice is about the fear of death: The most important thing to remember is not to be afraid. (Oct.)

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Review

"Harold Kushner once again arms his readers to battle life's difficult moments by showing the strengths they already have inside them: this time courage is the quality—the courage to change, to accept, to fight, and to follow virtue. An inspiring book for our times."

—Mitch Albom, author of *Tuesdays with Morrie*

"[Kushner] present[s] ideas that . . . provide a different and satisfying way of looking at some of these problems."

—*Washington Jewish Week*

“A helpful guide to navigating all kinds of fear.”

—*Austin American-Statesman*

“Rich with Harold Kushner’s honest, practical eloquence, *Conquering Fear* is the right book at the right time. It will ease the heart and strengthen the mind of everyone who reads it!”

—Forrest Church, author of *Love & Death*

“Harold Kushner speaks to the real questions that are on the minds and hearts of people. . . . Rabbi Kushner’s answers in this book are not glib. . . . He takes up these fears one by one, and gives us cogent advice on how to live with them. . . . A carefully reasoned effort to calm our spirits so that we do not yield to the many frightening terrors that can crush our spirits and spoil our will to live wisely and well.”

—*Palm Beach Jewish Journal*

“Filled with a great deal of wisdom. . . . Kushner’s message is inspirational and transcends all religious creeds and spiritualities.”

—*Library Journal*

“The inspirational author’s latest is likely to strike a chord with a wide range of readers.”

—*Booklist*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tom Burkhardt:

The book *Conquering Fear: Living Boldly in an Uncertain World* has a lot of knowledge on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of help. The book was authored by the very famous author. The author makes some research previous to write this book. That book very easy to read you can find the point easily after perusing this book.

Jonas Jones:

Reading a book to become new life style in this year; every people loves to examine a book. When you go through a book you can get a wide range of benefit. When you read guides, you can improve your knowledge, simply because book has a lot of information in it. The information that you will get depend on what kinds of book that you have read. If you need to get information about your research, you can read education books, but if you want to entertain yourself you can read a fiction books, this sort of us novel, comics, and soon. The *Conquering Fear: Living Boldly in an Uncertain World* will give you a new experience in looking at a book.

Margaret Holt:

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