



Fear: A Dark Shadow Across Our Life Span

Salman Akhtar

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Beginning with Freud's celebrated case of Little Hans, psychoanalysts and psychotherapists have been intrigued with the topic of fear. Eclipsed in theoretical writings by the term 'anxiety', fear remains a pervasive expression in day to day clinical work. Patients constantly talk about it. One implores that we cure him of his fear of dogs. Another offers the fear of aloneness as the rationale of her staying in a bad marriage. Yet another avoids all athletic activity due to the fear of physical injury. And a fourth one lives in utter denial of passing time to avoid facing his fear of death. Despite its ubiquitous presence, fear has received little direct attention in psychoanalytic literature. This book aims to fill this lacuna. It explicates various intensities of fear, e.g. apprehension, dread, panic, and terror. It delineates the boundaries between fear and anxiety and demonstrates how phobic states constitute an admixture of these two emotions. The book also deals with phobic character and the personality trait of cowardice. Individual chapters are devoted to six main fears of life that arise sequentially over the course of psychic development. These include the (i) fear of breakdown, (ii) fear of aloneness, (iii) fear of intimacy, (iv) fear of injury, (v) fear of success, and (vi) fear of death. Each of these fears is addressed by a distinguished psychoanalyst in a contribution written specifically for this volume. Elucidating symptomatology, psychodynamics, and treatment strategies, together these chapters and a final and synthesizing commentary upon them help enhance empathy and fine tune technical interventions with patients afflicted with fear of one or the other variety.

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