

Welcome to “Fearless Living 101”. My name is Sarah Zink, and I’ll be your guide for this session.

What are you afraid of? For me, that’s an easy answer: Spiders. I can speak to you with little fear, I can sing in front of hundreds of people, I can volunteer to teach a classroom of 2nd graders, but if you put a spider into that equation, I’m toast.

But beyond that – what am I afraid of? Well, I’m afraid of not being loved, of not being respected. I’m afraid of not being good enough, smart enough, or professional enough.

What are YOU afraid of? Are you afraid of speaking in front of a group or putting forward your ideas? Are you afraid of interviewing for that new position in your company or of asking for a raise? Are you afraid of going back to school to get that degree you’ve always wanted or are you afraid of quitting your job, dipping into your retirement, and starting that business you just KNOW will work?

Many of us live in fear – mostly of those things that are intangible to us – things that touch our hearts, not our hands.

When I speak to you of fearless living, I’m not talking about reckless abandon – I’m talking about taking intelligent steps to make a change, to try something new, to reach outside your comfort zone.

There’s an old saying – “The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth”.

Robert Schuller once said, “What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?” I say, “What’s stopping you?”

I believe that in order for us to live, to truly LIVE, we must become fearless. We must make a choice to live. We must walk to the edge of the water – the edge of the ledge – the edge of the fear that keeps us from truly living. We must realize that our fears create a powerful wall that keeps us from becoming all we are able to be.

Our membership in BPW indeed makes it possible for us to put forward our fears and expose ourselves to those who know us and love us best – our female peers. Do you think that your LO president has never been afraid? Do you think that when you sit in this room, there is no one sitting near you that’s ever been afraid? You already know the answer to that.

I believe that within each of us there exists two separate identities: the one that we feed and the one that we starve. Do you feed your “fearful” self, or do you feed your “fearless” self? Do you nurture your “fearless” self with whispered encouragement, or do you silently agree while your “fearful” self sets your course and direction in life?

The more you work to overcome your fears, the more fearless you will be. I have a friend who told me that at 20, she worried what EVERYONE thought about her. At 30, she worried about what her FAMILY thought of her, and at 40 she worried about what her BOSS thought of her. Finally, at 50 years old, she realized that she had lived the past 30 years worrying about what others thought of her, rather than what she thought of herself. She finally came to the realization that she didn’t care what ANYONE thought about her, that being true to herself was the most important thing. Please, don’t wait until you realize that you’ve been held captive by the fear of what others will think of you to make the choice to live fearlessly.

Well, I’m afraid that I’m about out of time, so let me leave you with a thought from Eleanor Roosevelt. “We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face. We must do that which we think we cannot.”