Beyond Fear
By Louise Diamond

Since fear is the biggest obstacle to an open heart, and an open heart is necessary for peacebuilding, we must learn how to transmute or transcend fear. There are many possible ways to do this – some will work better than others for different people, or at different times in our lives, or depending on how deep-rooted the fear is. Try one or more of the following activities:

Facing Fear
In these activities, you face your fears directly, rather than deny or hide from them, or pretend they do not exist. The goal is to acknowledge the fear, but not to let it stop you from pursuing your goal.

- Think of something you are afraid of. Notice how that fear holds you back from something you want. Now ask yourself, “What do I gain from holding on to this fear?”

- Think of something you are afraid of. Now imagine that the thing you are afraid of actually happens. Follow that in your mind until you get to a point where you can honestly say you could accept that; you could survive or live with it, maybe even learn and grow from it.

- Think of something you are afraid of. Look beyond the fear, to what you might achieve or obtain if only you could get past the fear. Now imagine the fear as a tangible ‘thing’ that you can hold in your hand. Place it somewhere out of the way – on a shelf, in a box, etc. – telling yourself you can always come back and pick it up again, but for now you choose to move it out of the way so you can reach your goal. Imagine stepping past the place where you have stored it, into a new space without fear, a space that contains your goal. What do you notice? How do you feel?

- Think of something new in your life, a possible change or positive opportunity that you have some anxiety about. Imagine or draw a line about three feet long on the floor in front of you. On one side of the line is the excitement about the new opening. On the other side is the fear you have about it. Experiment with stepping from one side of the line to the other. Go back and forth several times. What do you notice? How do you feel?

Transmuting Fear
In these activities, you actually release the fear, and allow it to become joy, love, excitement, openness, etc. Fear, like peace, is an energetic vibration which we can amplify by thinking about it or clinging to it as ‘truth.’ Like any energy, it is neither created nor destroyed – it only changes form. We can help that happen:
Think of something you are afraid of. Now think of someone you deeply, deeply love. As you are feeling that love through every atom of your being, ask yourself, where is the fear? Notice that you cannot hold the two simultaneously. Bring love to whatever you are afraid of, and watch it change.

Ask our friends in the natural world to help you transform the fear you carry. In your imagination, or in fact, request the assistance of the elements in transforming your fear (remember, we’re all in this together – even the elements are our relatives and want to help!):

- **Earth** – lay down on the earth, with your heart against the ground. Ask ‘Mother Earth’ to take the fear away, and then draw in new strength and renewal from her. Or, turn the fear over into the dirt as compost, seeing it break down into nutrient-rich soil that can fertilize the garden.

- **Fire** – write something you are afraid of on a piece of paper, and burn it off in a candle flame or in a fire, watching it become smoke and ash. Let the smoke carry your prayers or hopes into the heavens or around the world.

- **Water** – give the fear into a rushing river or stream and watch it be carried away, cleansed by the tumbling action of the water.

- **Air** – release the fear into the wind and see it carried off into the clouds, to return as fresh dew or rain that nourishes the crops.

**Embracing Fearlessness**

In these exercises you activate your true natural wisdom state, which is beyond all fear.

- Meditate on fearlessness. What does it mean to you? How does it feel?

- Imagine your hero or heroine of fearlessness, someone who is a model for you of that ideal state, the ultimate warrior whose only ‘weapon’ is love. Now realize that you are inseparable from that person. See yourself, feel yourself, as him or her.

- Go back to the place of peace you found in the previous Unit on Witness, the Power of Presence. In that place, receive a gift or special object that will banish fear and release all obstacles to open-heartedness. Draw a picture of that gift and keep it someplace in your house or office where you can see it – and claim it – often.