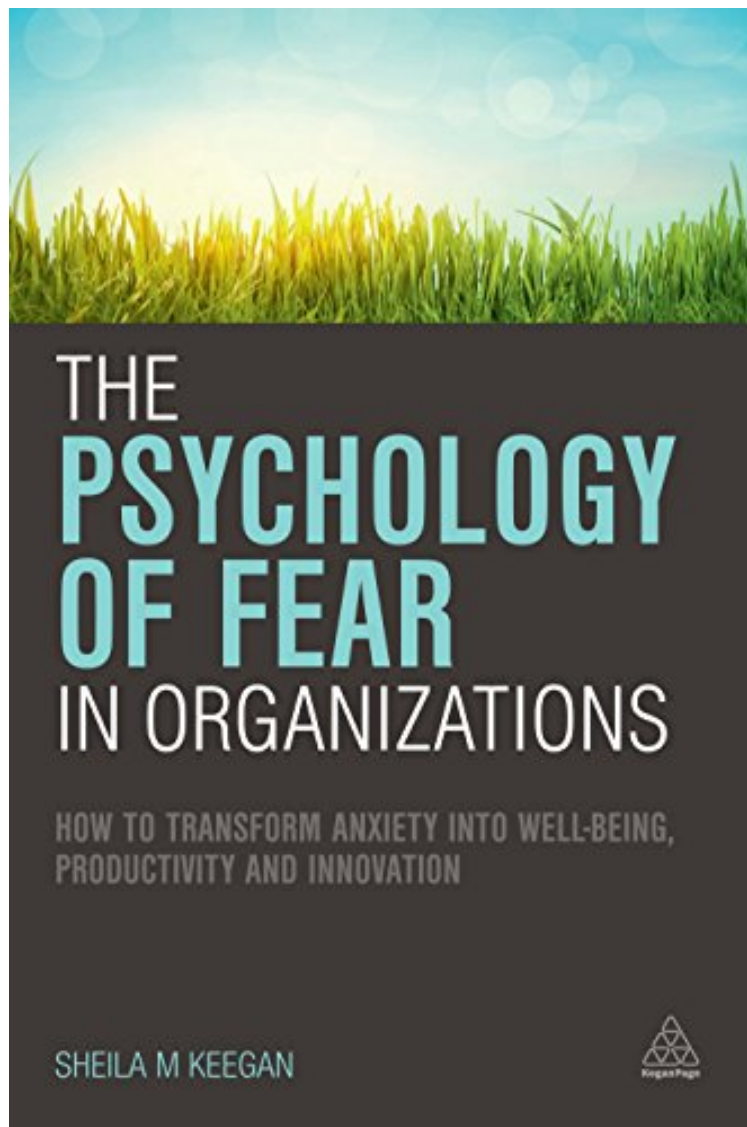


(Mobile pdf) The Psychology of Fear in Organizations: How to Transform Anxiety into Well-being, Productivity and Innovation

# The Psychology of Fear in Organizations: How to Transform Anxiety into Well-being, Productivity and Innovation

*Sheila Keegan*

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**Sheila Keegan : The Psychology of Fear in Organizations: How to Transform Anxiety into Well-being, Productivity and Innovation** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Psychology of Fear in Organizations: How to Transform Anxiety into Well-being, Productivity and Innovation:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. places that we can all do our best work and contribute to the

common goals of the ...By Kris Lea This book addresses the complexity of fear in the workplace, specifically in a way that is understandable and actionable. As individuals, we should all be able to work in organizations that appreciate us, develop us and value us! My goal is to help create healthy organizations, places that we can all do our best work and contribute to the common goals of the organization and society! Kris Lea, PsyD OD (ABD). 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This Book Will Give You Answers By Greg Hawod Fear has been part of our every day lives. We experience this emotion whenever we detect that something bad is about to happen or while it is happening. Since majority of us spend at least 1/3 of our day at work, there is no better place to feel this but in our organizations. Sheila Keegan presents a very insightful, thoughtful, and practical view of fear in organizations. She particularly describe this emotion against the backdrop of 2008 economic collapse. Moreover, she present a clear way for organizations to minimize the debilitating effects of fear and harness positive emotions. Clearly, no one wants to work with or for organizations sprinkled with fear. No one wants to continuously watching his back lest someone might will kick him out of the team. It is evident that we do our best when we are genuinely happy and fulfilled. Not to be one sided, this book explains that fear is not always detrimental. Fear, in the right amount and kind, propels individuals and group to perform well. A manager/leader just needs to know when it is appropriate to use it for the positive sustainable benefit of organization and its people. I recommend this book especially to those who wants to inculcate an environment of positivity and innovation in organizations. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "Fear is Still A Taboo Subject" By R. Michael Fisher Keegan is obviously competent, written a practical book (as the two reviews above indicate) if you are someone involved in working in organizations that are part of the status quo world. In that context Keegan provides a 'good fit' and obviously makes her living doing that. Her book is not radical, revolutionary, or outstandingly original and compares to the basic message many other organizational psychologists, gurus and such have provided for a long-time in the field of business and OD--I'm thinking the most foundational work of Jack Gibb in the 1970s on fear and trust in organizations. She has, like W. H. Deming and many others also come to see the destructive effects of excess fear. I found it somewhat disturbing, as an expert on fear, how little Keegan cites the people whose shoulders she stands on, and the book comes across with the message like this fear problem is so big and important today--as if, it hasn't been in the long history of humanity, or especially since 9/11 (which she doesn't even mention). Keegan's practical side reduces the fear problem (to fear as simply an emotion) to a small circle context of contemporary organizations (avoiding any political discussion), and what is a rather prosaic ending of the book: "We must learn to manage the risks and reduce the fear factor as best we are able.... This means developing a culture that encourages risk-taking and rewards courage--a culture that is led from the top and the bottom" (p. 253). So many authors, who delimit the Fear Problem to a "fear factor" problem, have said these kinds of things. And, at the same time (what I liked) is that Keegan acknowledges earlier in the book that fear is still out-of--control and damaging organizations as much as it has 30 yrs ago when we knew better. She correctly synthesizes many studies to prove this, of which tells a story of a massive failure in fear management/education. She cites the OD guru Meg Wheatley (p. xiv), who has trained so many business elites in fearlessness for decades, validating the depressing reality of how they have back-stepped very quickly to fear-based management/leadership when times get really terrifying. The fear management/education doesn't seem to hold. It is too bad Keegan did not cite the interview with the progressive Wheatley on "Eight Fearless Questions" she is asking leaders of all kinds to consider (2006). She remarks, "I don't know what would create fearlessness, but I think this is a very important question." Wheatley, is not talking about some "fear factor." And Keegan recognizes this larger context (thank goodness) of the Fear Problem that we have not been able to turn around in 30 years (or more). She calls it the "culture of fear" (re: using Barry Glassner's work). However, she misses many more radical and critical culture of fear theorists and critics (including myself) in her book, and the chapter on "culture of fear" as context for the cultures of fear in organizations, doesn't go where it needs to go--and that is the political aspects of fear and the long-time historical problem of trauma related to the formation of a culture of fear. Being an organizational context, and her being trained in organizational psychology, I understand why she may lack depth in the sociocultural, political and philosophical problems of the culture of fear operating in so many parts of the world. And, yet, how can we, Keegan, anyone, talk about a "fear factor" and only nod to "culture of fear" (of which Glassner's critique is not the best but it is good). Sure, Keegan covers her self by saying at the end of the book she may have "attempted to cover much ground and probably I have been overambitious. There are topics that deserved more attention that I have not done justice to" (p. 256). Every serious author knows this. All I am asking is for Keegan, and anyone writing and teaching about fear in organizations today is to spend a lot more time on the way "organizations" are the "society" and are the "world" and to arbitrarily cut them off and reduce down to only the context that Keegan does, practical or not--is exactly, arguably, the very problem of why fear management/education is failing us. We lack the wider and deeper perspectives when we are trying to understand fear better--trying to understand now, why it has run way ahead of us and is destroying so much quality and life on this planet. The exemplar organization of fearlessness is one that does not shrink and cleanly cut the Fear Problem down. Sure, everyone has to take a small bite to move ahead and solve problems, but that cannot be done without a larger collective work, a larger movement. See for example, the Fearlessness Movement ning I began or the Fearlessness Movement on Wikipedia, etc. The first principle to truly overcoming the Fear Problem, is a good holistic-integral

analysis, and the psychology of fear which Keegan restricts herself to will not be able to stop the "roots" of decay; she'll only be advising how to stop the "symptoms." All this critique aside, the hint of redemption to enhance our understanding of the Fear Problem is in her book (thank goodness)--as she several times points to the problem of defining and conceptualizing fear (e.g., p. 7). We often are arrogant in thinking we already know what it is. Fear itself (not fears) has to be the better unit of analysis--and I have studied many authors across disciplines who are saying that fear itself is morphing, and most of us have no idea how to recognize all its forms and disguises, its trickster nature. I think we all could do well by studying Keegan's book, it deserves that, and to bring good critique to its inadequacies, and then improve it. Her statement, wrought from a lot of research she has done, and a lot of experience in the field, is a good one to remember, to tame our arrogance on the topic: "Fear lurks in the shadows and has many faces.... Fear is rife throughout many contemporary organizations, both in the private and public sectors, yet fear is a taboo subject" (p. 41). Indeed, that is my experience for 27 years of studying fear and fearlessness using a transdisciplinary approach. The complication of fear being a taboo subject in organizations (and much of society in the West, at least)- is a deeply philosophical and methodological problem, and hopefully the organizational psychologists, like Keegan will join the rest of the communities of thinkers and researchers, educators, who are working on the same problem. Fear itself, likes to keep us all in our isolated containers, reductionistic methods, applications-- because that way, we'll never find fearlessness--we may only find spurts of "courage" (which Keegan seems to think is the answer).

In the context of global economic recession, fear has become institutionalized in many organizations, both in the private and public sectors. Board directors are under pressure from shareholders, senior executives are attempting to maintain sales in a nervous market and many people are concerned about job security and maintaining their living standards. This book shows how fear manifests itself in large organizations, how it impacts on the workforce and how by reducing our willingness to take risks and to innovate, it can inhibit economic growth and innovation, at both an individual and corporate level. The Psychology of Fear in Organizations examines the psychological barriers to innovation and presents initiatives to loosen the paralysis caused by the economic downturn.

"This book should be read by everyone who has anything to do with managing organizations. It is soundly based in history, the literature and personal experience. Keegan not only describes and explains the increase of fear in organizations but also suggests how to reduce it so that everyone can be happier and more productive."