

Bryan – that discovery call!, Evangelist Laurice Thompson-Murphy, with whom I spent many days and very late nights working on so many literary projects for various people/events, Coach Camelle Ilona – you are awesome!! Pastor Marie Reid – (GD extraordinaire!) it was great to work with you on my own project for a change. God bless you all.

Lastly to all my siblings – you all have stories that the world need to read. Tell your stories.

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Everyone has to deal with fear at some point in their lives regardless of age, position, gender or faith, but no one really wants to admit that they struggle with fear. If we're honest and take the time to look diligently into our lives, we will be able to identify a dream, a plan or an idea we once had, that we abandoned because we were too afraid to try and make it happen.

For the most part, we are able to get on with our lives and the fear factor does not interfere with life too much, but there are times when fear features heavily in our affairs and we are left paralysed and incapacitated by it. You know that feeling when you are faced with a massive task or you've been put on the spot, maybe someone asks you a question in a meeting and your mouth suddenly gets dry, your head starts spinning and your heart feels like it is about to burst out of your chest. We've all been there. For some of

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us the feeling lasts longer than for others. It can last for years.

For some of us this happens at very significant times in our lives when we have to make major decisions, or are about to embark on a very important journey or venture. If left unchallenged, that paralysing fear can control us to the point that we are just barely making it through life, a mere shadow of who we really are or who we should be.

I want to dispel the myth that everyone can or should just “get over” fear once and for all, but instead, to look at the fact that fear can challenge and affect us on a daily basis and even on a moment to moment basis, but also that it is possible to win the battle over fear every time, to do what we want to do and become the person God created us to be. We were all created on purpose for purpose and have been assigned time and seasons in which this purpose should be accomplished. But fear can affect this to the point that we forget that we ever had purpose and our time can be spent doing other things that do not contribute to that purpose.

To every thing there is a season, a time to every purpose under the heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1 NKJV

American psychologist, Abraham Maslow said: *one can choose to go backwards to safety or forward towards growth. Growth must be chosen again and again, fear must be overcome again and again.*

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I really hope this book helps to debunk some of the myths about fear, how it can be overcome and that this book helps every reader to fulfil their hopes and dreams. Someone *needs* you to win this battle, so you must stop being controlled or crippled by fear!

This book is written from the perspective of my lived experience as a Christian, African - Caribbean woman living in the UK, and references to these aspects of my life will appear in the book, as I share my experiences of fear and how I use the tools of the Word of God and prayer to deal with it.

There will also be references to the global pandemic that started in 2020 and subsequent lockdown as that is when this book was written.

The inevitable coaching question is then: what would you do if fear were not an issue?

It's time to Step Out of Fear.

Valerie Kudjoe

CHAPTER 1

THE SEED OF FEAR

I remember my first swimming lesson in secondary school which was a defining moment in my relationship with water. I had gained two swimming certificates in primary school, 25 metres and 50 metres and I was extremely proud, especially when I presented them to my parents and they admitted that neither of them had ever been taught to swim properly. My Mum was terrified of water, while my Dad was not so scared and had learned to jump in, resurface and play but did not know how to actually swim. I remember thinking at the time that they were born and raised in Jamaica, which is a tiny island surrounded by water, so how could they not know how to swim? I didn't dare ask.

Armed with the confidence of my previous achievements in primary school, I was excited about swimming in 'big school' and lined up with my classmates by the poolside in Crystal Palace. The water was

almost still, with just the slightest ripple and very blue, bluer than the water at Ladywell Leisure centre where my primary school swimming lessons had taken place. The teacher asked if we could all swim and asked anyone who could not swim to raise their hand. I felt good that I did not have to raise my hand and felt sorry for my one lonely classmate who reluctantly put her hand up and admitted not being able to swim. I felt her shame as she was asked to sit aside and watch.

The teacher then asked all of us to jump in, one by one and swim the short distance from where we were standing to the end of the pool, get out and sit on the bench. It was about 25 metres and I knew I could do it. When my turn came, I stood on the edge of the pool, took a deep breath and used all my strength to draw my knees up high as I propelled myself forward and jumped into the pool. I splashed down deep into the water and for a split second I was fine, the water was rushing into my ears, I could not see and could not hear. I realised in a moment of horror that I also could not feel the bottom of the pool! I started to flounder, my arms and legs flailing around in the water as I tried to lift my body weight back up to the surface several times and failed. Panic set in and I started to gulp huge mouthfuls of the chlorine flavoured water, it filled my mouth and nose and I tried to scream but couldn't.

Just as I thought my life was over, I suddenly felt a hard object beside my arm and became aware of the

distorted sound of someone shouting at me to grab the object. It was the rescue pole, a long wooden stick that the teacher was holding out to me to stop me from drowning. I grabbed it and felt it pulling me towards the edge of the pool where I could hold on, get my head above the water and finally take a breath.

After a few gasps of air, which felt like the best thing I had ever experienced, I became aware of my teacher's angry voice shouting at me to get out of the water. I looked up and saw her angry, red face and flashing eyes looking down at me. I recall wondering why she was so angry, I was the one who nearly drowned, so why was she so angry? I found out when I exited the pool and she directed me to sit beside my classmate who could not swim. I received a severe dressing down and was so ashamed I almost wished I was back in the pool fighting for my life as she shouted at me, accusing me of lying that I could swim. I didn't lie, I could swim, I just had never learned to tread water or float. She informed me that the water was only a few inches above my head, especially as I was so tall, and that my actions had been totally unnecessary and had put me in danger and her in a difficult position. I realised she was really angry because if I had not been able to grab the pole, she would have had to jump in and rescue me and, worst case scenario, I could have drowned if she was not able to do that. She was actually more concerned about herself than she was about me!