

Fear and fearlessness

Frightening others is one of the ways in which people make themselves feel powerful, and unlike hunting it is an exercise of power to which almost anyone can be tempted. It is notable in this regard that one of the forms of giving practised by the Bodhisattva, along with the giving of the Dharma, is the giving of fearlessness. To inspire terror in others could be considered as unskillful as the giving of fearlessness is skillful...

Like desire, fear can be a positive thing. Just as we should have a healthy desire to change ourselves for the better, so we should also have a healthy fear of anything that holds us back from following the path of spiritual development and self-transcendence. Many of us are lulled by our day-to-day routine into a false sense of security, but human existence is uncertain. We are going to die and it is not morbid to be mindful of the fact. We should be 'afraid' of conditioned existence itself.

But fear on behalf of the ego is an unskillful mental state. It is a contraction, even a petrification of energy, and it is therefore unskillful to induce such fear in others.

Sangharakshita, *Living Ethically*, p. 35

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