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How to Conquer a Fear of Earthquakes

Nicholas Pollak / April 26, 2010 /

[OP-ED \(http://www.thefrontpageonline.com/category/op-ed\)](http://www.thefrontpageonline.com/category/op-ed)



On Easter Sunday at the home of my wife’s relatives, we were eating when a 7.2 earthquake hit. The ground in Poway began to move, the house began to shake. Glasses, plates and food started moving across the table.

Once we realized what was happening, we did what we always have been told: Look for solid cover or go outside, but avoid standing too close to windows.

Earthquakes are terrifying to the uninitiated.

A person’s entire mental security can be undone in seconds.

This trauma can disturb a person to the extent he may want to change his entire life — meaning moving where there are no earthquakes.

Never having experienced an earthquake, my first one here unnerved me to the point I felt I needed to move out of the state.

Thankfully, common sense prevailed.

I recognized that earthquakes do not occur every minute of every day. If I took sensible precautions, living in an earthquake zone may not be bad.

When I reacted badly to my first earthquake, I pledged to prevent a repeat.

How to Change Direction

I know that what we don't understand scares us more than what we do understand.

I found as many books as I could about earthquakes, how they occurred, where, what kind of damage could be expected. I learned of the different types of earthquakes and earth movements.

I studied photographs of damaged earthquake areas and the estimates of what we here in Los Angeles could expect if we were struck by The Big One. I came to understand earthquakes.

I still don't love them. But the more I learned, the more amazed I was by the power of Mother Nature and the ingenuity of engineers to construct buildings, roads and bridges that could resist the force of severe earthquakes.

I also developed a self-hypnotizing program of desensitization to the effects of an earthquake and my previous reactions to them. I imagined sitting in a chair and watching myself react negatively to an earthquake. I allowed the full range of emotions to play out, the fear, the shaking, the rapid heartbeat, the desire to run and, of course, uncontrolled sweats.

Next, I imagined the same scenario, but this time I was calm, relaxed and detached. I allowed myself to feel safe, and to understand what was happening.

How After several times, I found that with each subsequent earthquake my fear has diminished greatly. When the last one struck, I barely moved. I was almost enjoying the ride.

Precautions to Consider

Make no mistake, I have a healthy respect for the chaos an earthquake can cause. But I accept them more calmly, with a clear thinking attitude.

Make sure you have taken adequate precautions in anticipation of an earthquake. A wrench next to the gas valve, knowing where and how to turn off the electricity, first-aid kits, extra water stored in containers, enough food for a few days, a battery-operated radio, blankets a tent, and — significantly — a plan with members of your immediate family as to how to connect, and where to meet. Also, try to keep a small kit in your car with an extra sweater, jogging shoes, food, water and a first aid kit.

I know people who will not enter high-rise buildings, who will sit in traffic under overpasses and look up terrified that an earthquake will occur and they will be crushed. They will not cross a bridge for fear of an earthquake and the bridge collapsing with them on it.

They will not attend concerts or movies, fearing that if an earthquake strikes, they will not be able to escape.

These are legitimate concerns, but, to allow your whole life to be affected by a force of nature, is, well, constricting, to say the least.

With common sense, sensible precautions and desensitization, persons can overcome their rational, yet irrational, fear.

If you know anyone with these fears, please have them contact me.

A clinical hypnotherapist, handwriting analyst and expert master hypnotist, Nicholas Pollak may be contacted at [***nickpollak@hypnotherapy4you.net***](mailto:nickpollak@hypnotherapy4you.net)
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