

# Zero Thinking – Facing Fear with Hope

## I Am A Rock

P. Simon, 1965

A winter's day  
In a deep and dark December  
I am alone  
Gazing from my window  
To the streets below  
On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow

I am a rock  
I am an island

I've built walls  
A fortress deep and mighty  
That none may penetrate  
I have no need of friendship  
Friendship causes pain  
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain

I am a rock  
I am an island

Don't talk of love  
Well I've heard the word before  
It's sleeping in my memory  
I won't disturb the slumber  
Of feelings that have died  
If I never loved I never would have cried

I am a rock  
I am an island

I have my books  
And my poetry to protect me  
I am shielded in my armor  
Hiding in my room  
Safe within my womb  
I touch no one and no one touches me

I am a rock  
I am an island

And a rock feels no pain  
And an island never cries

“Welcome to zero thinking where cutting off fear is done at any cost” (Price, pg. 186).

### Responsibility and Fear

Living a responsible life requires that we are able to embrace fear.

- a. A reverent fear for an almighty God who holds our eternal destiny in His hands. We have to trust in His grace when we admit “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God “(Rom. 3:23). A reverent fear gives us hope because we do not have to depend on our own inconsistent efforts to live a better life. It is only through Jesus that

we can be united with God and it is only God who can truly transform a man's heart from stone to flesh (Ezek. 11:19).

- b. Legitimate fears also need to be embraced; fear of pain, fear of consequences for our actions and fear of the feeling of self-disgust.
  - 1. Think of the pain you felt when a person you cared about disappointed you, or you hurt someone you cared about. It can cut deep. Without the skills, support or perseverance to navigate that pain, it can seem impossible to overcome.
  - 2. Think of the consequences you received for doing something wrong: a fine for a speeding ticket, relational brokenness, loss of a job, loss of trust, loss of freedoms, maybe even jail time. Many consequences require a loss of something important to you. Grieving any loss, whether legitimate or not, is difficult.
  - 3. When you are truly able to recognize the hurt you cause God or others, a feeling of self-disgust can overcome you. David describes his self-disgust in Psalm 51, after he was confronted by the prophet Nathan about his adultery, "For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth." Fortunately for David, he had the hope of forgiveness and the cleansing of his guilt. But without that hope, guilt turns to shame and shame eats at the heart of those who allow themselves to feel it.

#### Embracing Fear vs. Becoming a Rock

In Paul Simon's song, *I am a Rock*, the writer expresses his response to relational pain. He would rather build a fortress around his heart than allow himself to feel pain. He chooses a life of loneliness and isolation. But because God made us to be relational beings, the deep ache caused by isolation often requires an illegitimate "fix" – pursuing a big "E" to satisfy the ache. Proverbs 28:14 says, "Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble."

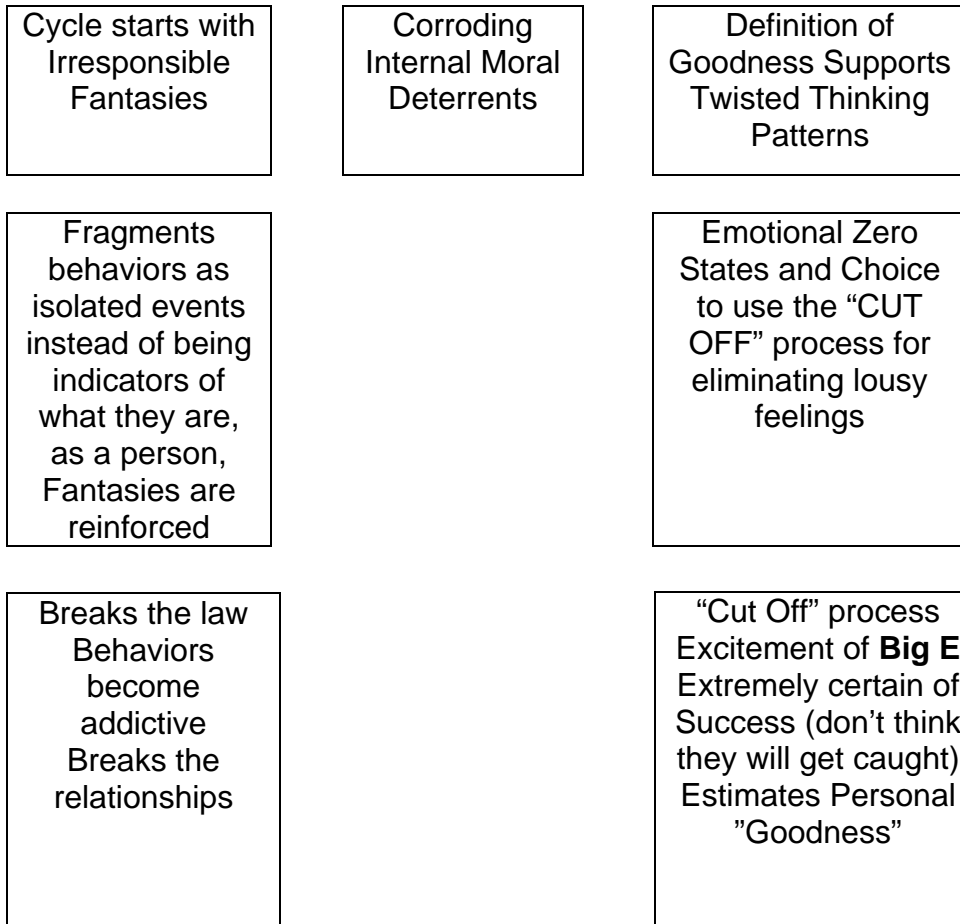
- a. Responsible people are willing to navigate their fear of pain, consequences for their actions and their self-disgust when they hurt someone. They realize that their only hope of healing is working through the pain, not avoiding it. They are willing to take the necessary steps to reconcile a relationship or make right a wrong they have committed. They are able to submit themselves to God and others for discipline and correction because they know that God is good and following His ways (living a responsible life) will lead to true freedom.

- b. Zero thinkers are often heard to say, “I’m not afraid of anything,” yet their actions reveal they are very afraid. What are they afraid of?
  1. Feeling the pain that comes with life and their bad choices.
  2. Feeling self-disgust or being swallowed up in shame.
  3. Because being responsible also means submitting to discipline and correction, they are also afraid of someone else controlling them. They falsely believe “freedom” means being free from other’s control.
  4. Other irrational fears include the fear of injury or death if they are not in control or the fear of being put down.
- c. Zero thinkers response to fear – cut it off at all costs (become a rock).
  1. They cut off lousy feelings and go for broke, not caring about anyone who’s hurt by them.
  2. They combine inflated thinking with zero thinking so they can consider themselves as essentially good even when caught in an unloving, irresponsible act.
  3. They shut off all internal moral deterrents.
  4. They sabotage relationships so that they do not feel loyalty to anyone.
  5. They cut off the fear of getting caught as they combine their zero thinking with inflated thinking
  6. They choose to fragment their behavior from who they are and look at every misbehavior as a separate event instead of looking at who they are as a person and how their collective irresponsible acts affect others. When challenged, they reply, “It’s someone else’s fault” or “You don’t trust me” or “That was then and this is now” or “I’m doing fine, but if you keep pushing me, then you’re going to make me mad, and if I do something, it’s your fault.”

### Overcoming Zero Thinking

Changing the thinking process of a twisted thinker has to be a high priority. Overcoming zero thinking involves being able to develop a reverent fear of God, confront personal fear and stay engaged through the process of pain, accepting consequences and feeling self-disgust when irresponsible behaviors affect others. Those who are live with twisted thinkers need to understand the cycle involved in zero thinking so that they can prepare for the hurt and disappointment that comes with the storm as the twisted thinker disengages from relationships and pursues the “Big E” to erase his lousy feelings. Four things may aid in correcting the thinking process:

- a. Understand the cycle of zero thinking so that behavior is not fragmented from the person.



***Calm Before the Storm  
acting like everything is fine***

- b. Wait for the misery to take hold  
Although it may seem like you are not doing anything, waiting for a zero thinker to experience misery (self disgust) is important to his recovery. It is vital not to interfere with the consequences of his actions or "soften" how the hurt experienced by others is shared with the offender. If drugs or alcohol are added to zero thinking, the chemicals supply immediate cut offs from every external deterrent, but the drugs/alcohol are not responsible for the behavior because the twisted thinker is always responsible (It's always the thinking before the using).
1. In Hosea 5:15, the Lord says, "Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."
  2. The father of the prodigal son waited for him to feel the misery of his choices. He didn't chase after him. When the misery did it's job, the son returned to the father with a new willingness to live responsibly.

3. I John 1:8-10 – “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.” Being at an emotional zero is different than zero thinking. Being at an emotional zero could describe how you feel when you are face your sin and the ugliness of how we hurt others. This is a good place for a Christian who then can face God and others honestly and ask for their forgiveness and work through the consequences for what they’ve done. Zero thinking is what happens when a twisted thinking hits an emotional zero and tries to escape those feelings and responsibilities.

c. Sharpen problem solving skills

Problem solving skills are diminished in twisted thinkers. Use the acronym S.O.L.V.E. to improve problem solving.

1. S – state your problem.
2. O – outline your responses
3. L – list your alternatives
4. V – visualize your consequences
5. E – evaluate your results

d. Promote sensitivity to God

Cutting off fears means twisted thinkers haven’t grasped that God isn’t blind. He sees all, hears all, and knows all. They also haven’t grasped that God holds the key to working through pain instead of trying to escape it.

1. I Peter 3:12, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

2. Psalm 23: 3-4, “He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

Romans 3:23 - "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Ezek. 11:19 – "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh."

Psalm 51, after David was confronted by the prophet Nathan about his adultery, "For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth."

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