

Agile 2011 Proposal for Workshop

Fear-Driven Impediments

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Keywords

Fear, Anxiety, Impediments, Resistance to Change

Abstract

In many cases fear is an underlying reason for impediments of an agile team. There's a wide range of effects caused by fears: resistance to large organizational change, procrastination of personal decisions, inability to surface the real issues in a retrospective meeting, to name a few. To successfully remove such impediments, the fears of all involved individuals must be understood.

The workshop is divided into a short theoretical part and a longer practical part with group work. The different kinds of fear and their origins are shown as well as the distinction between anxiety and fear. A specific model of fear is presented and the purpose of fear is explained.

The participants of the workshop discuss in small groups to find strategies how to deal with their own fear-driven impediments and how to handle such situations.

Examples of fear-driven impediments:

- Fear of punishment: "I must not use TDD, my boss forbid it."
- Fear of responsibility: "I will not set up a new build server. It will be my fault if it won't work."
- Fear of personal loss: "I will be fired or removed from the team if I say 'no'."
- Fear of implications: "We can't change this specific part of the organization because team X would get unhappy."
- Fear of losing control: "Your self-organizing team is all well and good, but I'm going to give you a year plan to tell you who will do what and when."

In an agile environment it is important to concern oneself with fear and one's own fears. If fear is a reason to fail, it should be dealt with as fast as possible. Understanding fears and fear-driven impediments can open the readiness to change.

Process / Mechanics

Duration: 180 minutes

Number of participants: 20-30

10 min	Set The Stage	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Introducing the moderators • Agenda • Motivation • Disclaimer
15 min		<p><u>Getting to know the group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names and roles of participants • Stand up exercises: group by distance of hometown, level of experience, order by name, get to know your neighbors • Expectations
20 min	Gather Data	<p><u>Theoretical Background</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical aspects of fear • Resistance • Anxiety vs. Fear • Purpose of Fear • Model of Dörner
15 min		<p><u>Experience, Issues and Topics of Participants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather experience, issues and situations of participants • Clustering and grouping themes • Pick 3-5 themes to work on, possible themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fear of being responsible ○ Fear of saying “no” ○ Fear of failing ○ Resistance to change • Explain time boxed group work (like World Café) • Form groups, each with a “fear owner”
20 min	Generate Insights	<p><u>Time box 1: Analyzing Issues (Group work)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you recognize your own fears? • How would others recognize your fears? • Which symptoms could come up in the specific situation? • Which categories would these symptoms have (according to the model of Dörner)?
20 min		<p><u>Time box 2: Analyzing Issues (Group work)</u> <i>continued</i></p>
20 min	Decide What To Do	<p><u>Time box 3: Finding Solutions (Group work)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which purposes could have the identified fears? • How could these fears be used in a positive way?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could people handle their own fear in the specific situation? • What would I lose by giving up my resistance/fear? • What would get worse by giving up my resistance/fear? • What would get worse by keeping my resistance/fear?
20 min		<u>Time box 4: Refining Solutions (Group work)</u> <i>continued</i>
10 min		<u>Prepare group presentations</u>
10 min		<u>Group Presentations of Results</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time boxed: 2 minutes each
10 min		<u>Discussion</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define personal action item: write down what you want to do as next step or what you want to try
10 min	Closing	<u>Closing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short feedback from participants

Learning Outcomes

- Learn about theoretical aspects of fear and anxiety
- Learn about different kinds of fear, their origins, and their symptoms to recognize them
- Participants will discuss and analyze their own fear-driven impediments and elaborate how to handle such situations.



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Fear-Driven Impediments

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/wilderdom/266650346/> By Jimee, Jackie, Tom & Asha

Get to know each other (10 min)

Is there anything special about fear in an agile environment? What could that be?

Discuss positive aspects of fear.
What do you know where fear was/is a driver of innovation?



Please come up with at least five (5) fears you experienced or you can imagine with or in an agile team.

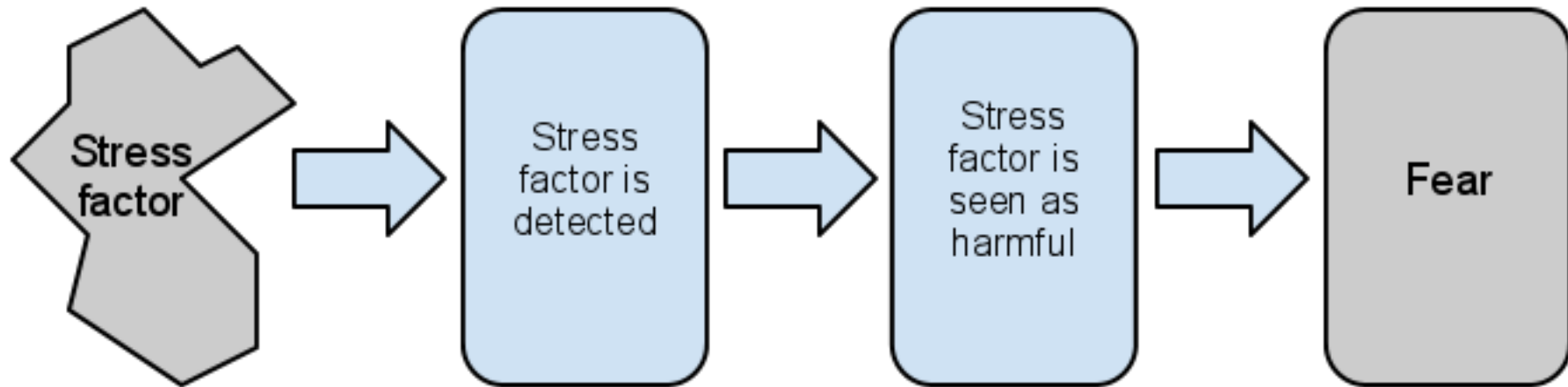
You'll use your results for further analysis.



What is the different between anxiety and fear? Discuss briefly.



One Definition of Fear



Fear is a physical and mental reaction to a stress factor that is considered to be a threat.

Types of fear (8 min)

Please have a look at the handouts.

Discuss at the tables

Try to cluster the identified fears based on the suggested categories.



How could you or others recognize the identified fears (or other fears)?



In the light of the new information (handout Dörner), how would you answer the above question now?

What behavior have you seen that might be related to fear?

Which symptoms could come up in the specific situation?

Which categories would these symptoms have?



What is the purpose of the identified fears?

How could these fears be used in a positive way?

How could people handle their own fear in the specific situation?

How could you support others addressing their fears?



Given some of the suggestions, continue to work on:

How could these fears be used in a positive way?

How could people handle their own fear in the specific situation?

How could you support others addressing their fears?



Gallery Walk (15 min)

Check out the results of the others

Find one person to pair/connect with
about one month after the conference



Personal Action (5 min)

Write down what you want to do as next step or what you want to try.

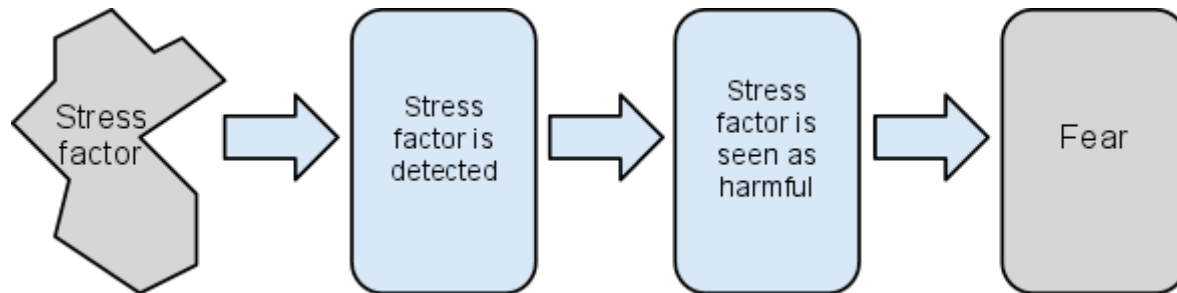
Please give it also to your pairing partner for a follow up.



Handouts - Definition of Fear

Panse/Stegmann¹ use the following short definition of fear for their work:

Fear is a physical and mental reaction to a stress factor that is considered to be a threat.



Anxiety = not related to object vs. **Fear = related to specific object**

Fear

- is the feeling of a specific threat
- fear - in contrast to anxiety - usually can be rationalized and is advisable
- fear is vital as it motivates actions of defense to avert danger

Commonalities and differences of fear and anxiety²

Commonalities:

Expectation of a dangerous, painful, or unpleasant situation
Tense apprehension
Increased excitement
Negative emotion
Uneasiness
Targeted towards the upcoming
Connected to physical side effects

Differences, for example:

<i>Fear</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>
Concrete danger	Source of threat is vague

¹ In: Winfried Panse and Wolfgang Stegmann, *Kostenfaktor Angst*, Verlag Moderne Industrie, Landsberg/Lech, 1996. p.42f

² In: Stanley Rachman. *Angst - Diagnose, Klassifikation und Therapie*, Huber, Bern, 2000. p.12

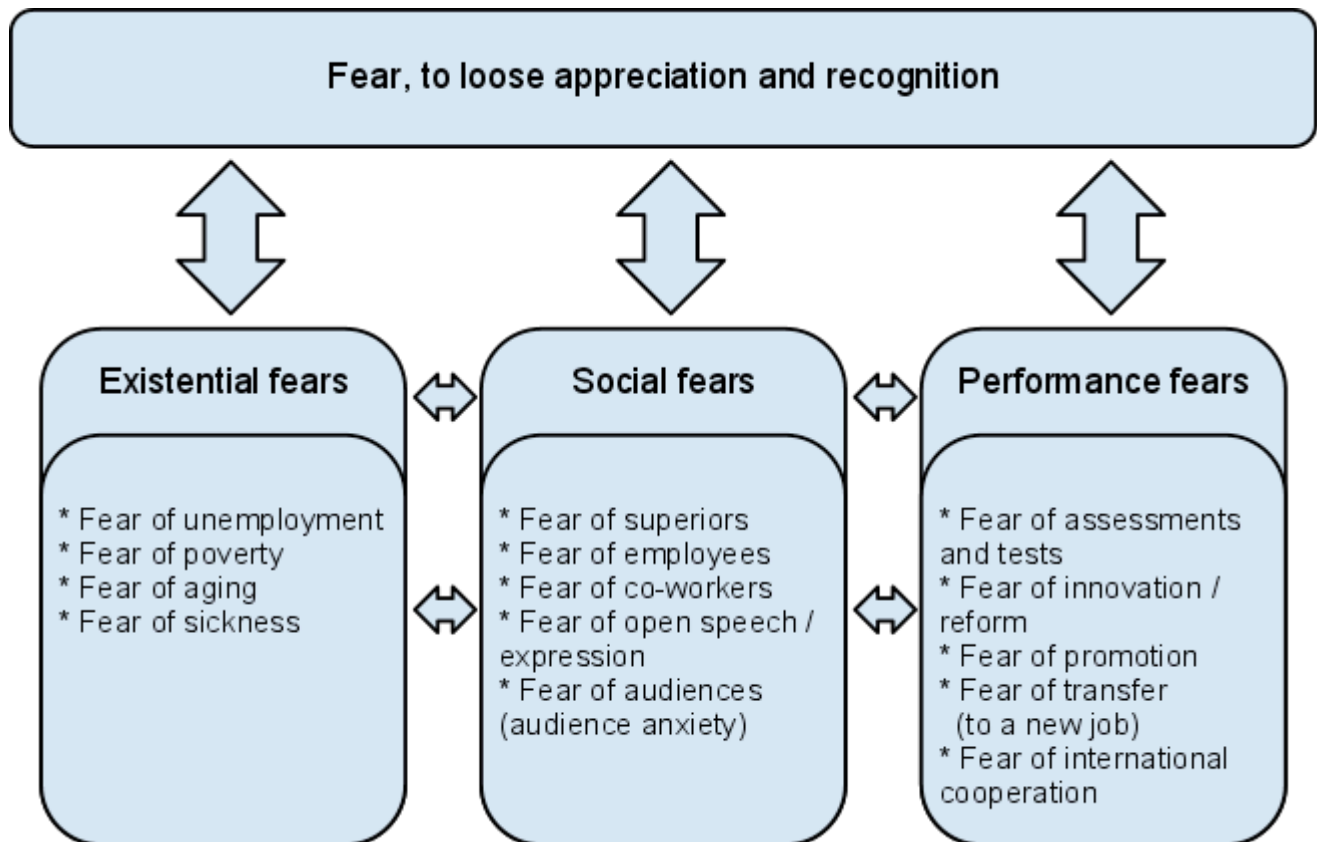
Comprehensible relation of threat and fear	Unclear relation of anxiety and threat
Limited in time / Fading out when threat is gone	Persistent
Triggered by signs of danger	Gradual beginning
Decay clearly identifiable	Fading decay
Exceptional reaction	Increased vigilance (sustained attention)
Physical sensation of alarming reaction	Physical sensation of an increased readiness of reaction
More rational	More irrational

“It makes sense to distinguish three major components of fear: the subjective feeling to be in danger, the accompanying physiological changes and - on the behavioural level - ways of avoiding the fearful situation or to flight from it.”³

³ In: Stanley Rachman. *Angst - Diagnose, Klassifikation und Therapie*, Huber, Bern, 2000. p.15

Handouts - Kinds of Fear

by Panse/Stegmann⁴



Existential fears: result from threats to the physical or professional existence

Social fears: result from threats to ones self-esteem in interaction with others; result from the interaction with other people and the fear that ones behaviour could be opposed by others; e.g. not being noticed, respected, appreciated, or being rejected, or having the feeling to be insecure or clumsy

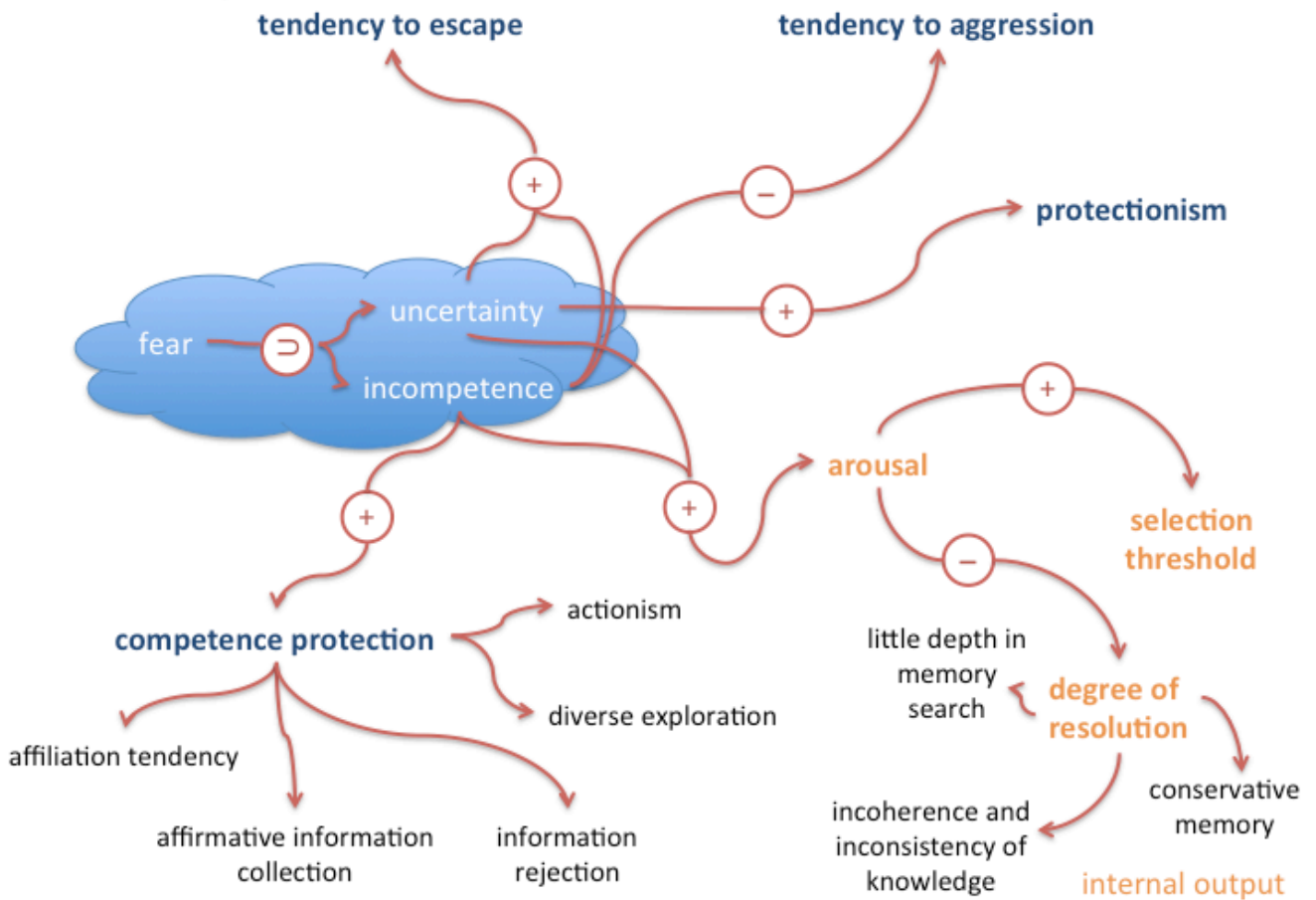
Performance fears: result from the fear of failure; often related to social fears as results are most often achieved together with others

⁴ In: Winfried Panse and Wolfgang Stegmann, *Kostenfaktor Angst*, Verlag Moderne Industrie, Landsberg/Lech, 1996. pp.43-71

Handouts - Behavioral impacts of fear (Dörner)

Fear is an emotion related to uncertainty; one does not know what could happen, and incompetence; if one would be able to handle possible danger (or a situation) than one would not fear it.

behavioural output



+ means: the more the more, the less the less; - means: the more the less, the less the more

Escape:

'Classical' flight or "play dead" reaction to a fearful situation, because we have no resources. This includes mental escape, i.e. not to engage anymore. It is also related to affirmation.

Aggression:

"Fight" - sometimes this can manifest in Bang-Bang decisions. Destruction seen as possibility to gain competence (destruction shows power). Also related to actionism.

Protectionism:

For example, an increase in control and governance.

Competence protection:

Do whatever necessary to use existing competences. Group with like-minded people; allow only information that confirms ones own opinion and reject any other information; however, don't go into unknown territory as you competence would be stretched;

Arousal:

The degree of resolution is related to our understanding of a situation. A low degree of resolution means a low processing depth, because it implies a high degree of inhibition of the association processes. Associations are conservative, i.e. we come up with only old stuff (the brain connections are stronger).

A high selection threshold leads to perseverance of one goal but makes it hard to switch to another. Fearful people tend to look at their fears rather than concentrate on the task at hand. A high selection threshold increases inflexibility, rigidity and stubbornness as it decreases the ability to look at all options and to use all knowledge available.

A little incompetence, the feeling of not knowing enough, is good for the tendency towards diverse exploration. One has to feel or know that one doesn't know enough. However once competence has to be high enough to feel that the exploration will be successful and one expects to have success. One has to be motivated and intrigued to really solve the new task.

Some impediments to work with

Developer: "I must not use TDD, my boss forbid it."

Developer: "I don't want to pair with X."

Developer: "I will not set up a new build server. It will be my fault if it won't work."

Developer: "I will be fired or removed from the team if I say 'no'."

Manager: "We can't change this specific part of the organization because team X would get unhappy."

Manager: "Your self-organizing team is all well and good, but I'm going to give you a year plan to tell you who will do what and when."

Developer: "If I suggest this, then I have to take care of it."

Developer: "I have no time to handle this."

Developer: "I don't want to do that."

Developer / Manager: "This is not my job."

Manager / Developer: "We have to do something right away"

Developer: "My boss never says "No" to us (the team)."

Manager / Developer: "We always did it this way here."

Manager / Developer: "This will not work here."

Manager / Developer: "This is not the way we do it here."

A developer hardly ever turns up to a Daily Standup.

A team member does not recognize or utter impediments.

Handout - Some basic suggestions to deal with Fear

- Sometimes it helps to use different words, like “concern”, “worry” or “issue” instead of “fear”, to get people talking about their fears.
- Acknowledge the fear, don’t put it aside with phrases like “don’t fear” or “it won’t be as bad as you imagine” - it is difficult to “take fear away” from someone, it is better if the person ‘gives up’ their fear.
- Show understanding and be emphatic for the concerns and fears.
- Don’t worry to speak about serious implications, like loss of job, if this could happen - address the fears and “worst nightmares” - and then talk about the likelihood of occurrence, the implications and mitigation strategies.
- Address fears early and quickly.
- Remember, fear is an emotion, so data and facts often don’t help much to address fear.
- Co-construct new options and opportunities.
- Sometimes it might help to re-frame the situation, i.e. to look at positive aspects of the fearful situation.
- Find exceptions - where did it work on the past? where was it not as bad as imagined? where did you not fear the change/the work/...? how did you handle similar situations in the past?
- Self-reflection - what is possibly my contribution to the situation at hand? as strange as it sounds, how could I make it worse? (and then, how could I make it better?)
- Try not to speak about others but speak with others.
- Tasks should be important and interesting (intrinsic motivation)
- look out for the right competence level
- make progress visible so that the final success can be anticipated
- it’s hardly a simple solution - look for side-conditions that might be related to the situation
- Discuss:
 - What could I lose by giving up my resistance/fear?
 - What could I gain by giving up my resistance/fear?
 - What could happen by giving up my resistance/fear?
 - What could happen by keeping my resistance/fear?