

## Time to Slow Down...Here's How **10** Emotional S-O-S Signals

**T**oo much to do, too many places to be, too little time to do it all. It's like our national anthem.

In all areas of our life—home, work, school—we are increasingly imprisoned by the perception that time is a scarce and limited resource. We rush from one commitment or activity to another and believe that we haven't a minute to spare. We yearn for more time, yet we often feel anxious and guilty when idle.

Is this how life is supposed to be? No! Nor does it have to be.

But until we change our relationship to time, our lives will continue to speed away from us—at enormous cost to our health and to direct experience of ourselves and the world around us.

"There is no issue, no aspect of human life, that exceeds this in importance," says Jacob Needleman, author of *Time and the Soul*. "The destruction of time is literally the destruction of life."

When we learn to shift time, our relationships become more rewarding, our time spent alone is richer, our aging is more satisfying, our work is more fruitful and our stress and anxiety are less paralyzing, or even nonexistent.

To allow time to "breathe" more in your life, try some or all of the following suggestions from Stephan Rechtschaffen, author of *Timeshifting*, as well as others. See if your reservoir of time starts to refill.

**Pause.** Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Han suggests taking a deep breath before answering the phone. Other conscious pauses throughout the day—a moment of silence before each meal, sitting in the car a few minutes before entering the house after work—help us to "come home" to ourselves. Our spacious selves.

**Carve out idle time alone.** Greek philosopher Aristotle noted that "nature requires us not only to be able to work well but also to idle well." Just because you're not doing anything doesn't mean that nothing's getting done!

**Live as fully as possible in the present moment.** When we leave behind thoughts of the past or future, we can experience time more peacefully, says Eckhart Tolle, author of *The Power of Now*.

**Toss your schedule whenever you can.** Even better, schedule spontaneous time and then surprise yourself.

**Examine underlying reasons for your busyness.** What emotions would you experience if you weren't so busy? What would you wish for? Emotional work is challenging but essential if we are to stop running from our hearts.

**Play.** Whether you sing, wrestle, paint, shake your bootie—whatever—play helps us to step outside of ordinary time.

**Create time retreats.** Once a year or so, choose to do something for a week or more that allows you to shift into a different rhythm—something where you can just "be" without the need for doing anything.

**Spend time in nature.** We can't help but slow down in nature's unhurried pace. Watching a soaring bird or examining a flower can seem to stretch a minute into an hour.

We can learn to experience time more purposefully and meaningfully—so that it's not an enemy robbing us of the joy of life. We needn't be at time's mercy. When we change our awareness, we can actually experience the gifts of time. ✧

When faced with emotionally distressing situations, send an S-O-S! When you master these *Signs of Strength* "signals," the help you receive will likely appear in the form of improved relationships, greater joy and connection with yourself, better self-care and enhanced communication.

### 1. Respond instead of react.

When we react, we give away our personal power.

**2. Identify and learn from your judgments.** Judgments are often a reflection of our own inner needs and values.

**3. Reach out when you need it.** Asking for help is not a weakness.

**4. Keep your word**—especially to yourself. Beautiful palaces are built on this foundation of integrity.

**5. Speak what is true for you.** Authenticity begins here, now.

**6. Take time for yourself.** This isn't narcissistic or indulgent. Caring for yourself helps you care for others better.

**7. Know what you want.** Take the time to figure out this one. It's worth it.

**8. Don't take things personally.** Even if it sounds personal, it usually isn't. Let it slide off.

**9. Honor your limits.** Setting boundaries is an act of self-care.

**10. Recognize fear as a guide, not a barrier.** Fear can be a friend when seen in the right light. ✧

## A Letter From

*Margaret Hood Black*



For many of us, time seems to have sped up to the point that we feel constantly at a deficit. "I don't have the time," is the ever-present refrain. It seems so overwhelming.

But time doesn't have to be an enemy that we curse. The cover article for this issue looks at how we can befriend time, how taking time off often seems to create extra time. It's no easy task and requires us to set aside our fight with the clock and begin to listen to our hearts, trusting that all will get done that needs to be done.

Fear of failure, the subject of the page 3 feature article, can keep us stuck in old patterns and habits. But failure, however painful and humbling, can actually be a lever to open the door to a richer, more authentic, joyful life.

Learning from our failures, rather than running from them, is evidence of emotional strength, as noted in the Top 10 list of emotional SOS signals...and here, SOS means "Signs of Strength."

This issue's quiz—"Are Your Money Beliefs and Practices Serving You?" is not just for those who find themselves struggling to make rent each month; unhealthy beliefs and practices around money come in all levels of bank account.

And the back-page article explores the common psychological obstacles to getting clutter-free and how clearing clutter is a supreme act of kindness—to yourself!—that can have far-reaching, self-empowering results.

May this year bring you more self-awareness and a profound experience of being alive. Please do not hesitate to call if you would like help with any issues in your life.

## Are Your Money Beliefs and Practices Serving You?

*The lack of money, the fear of losing what money we have, the dread of not having enough money. Money, money, money, money...we are ALWAYS thinking about money!*

*But sometimes, our unconscious or unspoken thoughts and attitudes about money can get in the way of a sense of well-being and security in our lives. Take this quiz to discover whether your relationship with money is serving you well.*



### True False

- 1. I'm embarrassed about the amount of debt I owe; I would never talk about it with any of my friends or acquaintances.
- 2. I worry that I will never be able to make it financially if my spouse leaves me or dies.
- 3. Having money means having control.
- 4. I feel ashamed about having more money than my friends (or less than); if they found out, I'm afraid they wouldn't like me.
- 5. It seems like I'm always comparing my financial situation with others'; no matter how much I actually have, I always feel like I come up short.
- 6. I have no idea where my money goes every month. I just don't think about money.
- 7. Regardless of my bank balance or net worth, I'm secretly afraid I will lose everything and become a homeless person.
- 8. I'm too busy to deal with my money. I just don't have the time.
- 9. I'm clueless about money; I don't even know the right questions to ask. My financial advisor just tells me what to do with my money.
- 10. I keep having to use a credit card to cover my monthly bills.
- 11. I act as if I have plenty of money, but inside, I'm always worried that I don't have enough, even to meet my monthly bills.
- 12. I'll always have to do without, so I might as well get used to it. I can never really have what I want.
- 13. My body gets tense when monthly bill-paying time rolls around or when contemplating a large purchase.
- 14. It's hard to face people I owe money to.
- 15. I use money to punish or reward myself.
- 16. As a rule, I always buy the most inexpensive item. It's frivolous to spend extra money, even if I'd prefer something else.
- 17. I have no idea where I got my attitudes about money.

*If you answered true to even five of the above questions, you may want to explore your beliefs around money. By better understanding your attitudes and values toward money, you may be more able to gain control of money instead of it controlling you. Please don't hesitate to call if you'd like to discuss your relationship with money. \**

# Unleash Your Potential by Releasing Your Fear of Failure

The world landscape is strewn with stories of success rising from the ashes of failure. Walt Disney was fired from the *Kansas City Star* in 1919 because, his editor said, he “lacked imagination and had no good ideas.” Stephen King’s first novel, *Carrie*, was rejected 30 times before being accepted. And on and on...

Yet failure tends to strike fear in our hearts like nothing else. There is so little tolerance for it in our culture and tremendous pressure to get it right every time, to be in control, to succeed and win.

But because we are human, we cannot help but fail. We suffer from failed relationships, failed parenting, failure at work, failure in health. And when we do fail, the wounds may penetrate so deeply into our psyche that we begin to think, “I am a failure,” rather than “I failed.” We might begin to make safe choices, to settle for less than we really want, out of fear of failure.

What would it be like to cast failure in a different light, to take it out of the

darkness of disgrace and guilt, to remove the feeling of “disaster” associated with failure, to look for what it tells us about our well-being and our conduct in life? What enormous amounts of energy would be freed up? And for what?

“You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing that we call ‘failure’ is not the falling down, but the staying down,” said silent-film actress Mary Pickford.

## Open Door to a New Success

Like Audubon, a failure can be a lever to open the door to a richer, more authentic life. Many a radical transformation has had failure at its root.

Author Suzanne Falter says, “There really is no such thing as failure. There is only the rearrangement of plans and the surrender of ego. There is only the twist in the road we never expect.”

## Spark Creativity

Sometimes we need to be jolted out of our routine and back into the essential work of creating ourselves. Failure doesn’t just clear its throat, it blows a trumpet in our ears and stirs up all the creative juices. We can’t help but respond with passion and drive, as Stephen King did when writing *Carrie*.

## Promote Risk-Taking and Change

Failure is a natural offshoot of adventure and risk-taking, and growth is a natural offshoot of failure. Great

courage is needed to face real change. A great failure can be the influence that enables us to risk and change.

## Getting Through It

In his book *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*, Thomas Moore writes:

“If we could understand the feelings of inferiority and humbling occasioned by failure as meaningful in their own right, then we might incorporate failure into our work so that it doesn’t literally devastate us.”

Here are a few suggestions for working constructively (succeeding!) with failure.

**Acknowledge your feelings** of pain, humiliation and/or inadequacy.

**Laugh, if you can.** A little bit of humor goes a long way in learning to accept failure.

**Acknowledge your responsibility.** Don’t deny the importance of the failure, but neither let it overwhelm you with guilt. Guilt isn’t helpful; taking responsibility is.

**Forgive yourself.** Forgiveness doesn’t take away the consequences or the memory of the failure, but it does soften the fall and clear a path for the next step.

**Build a base of supportive people.** Share the reality of your life. When you stop hiding shame and denying negative feelings, issues are quickly surfaced and resolved.

**No self-recrimination.** Replace “If only...” with “Next time...” to keep focused on the future.

**Reflect.** Seek not to blame but to search for the wisdom beneath the failure. With real curiosity, ask yourself these questions:

- How can this failure serve me?
- What does this setback mean?
- What have I learned and gained?
- How can I use this failure?
- How can I see it in a different way?
- What is positive here?
- What am I really trying to accomplish?

**Expect to make mistakes again.** Some organizations are now building in this expectation and experiencing the enormous potential for innovation, teamwork and achievement that is unleashed when the fear of failure is removed. Individuals can experience the same potential.

Ultimately, failure is not about loss, deficiency and flaws. It’s about learning lessons and courageously moving on. It’s about retaining hope and the instinct for joy. The lessons of failure make us wiser, stronger and more prepared for the rest of our journey, as long as we take them with us. ✨

“There is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction.” — Oprah Winfrey

# The Psychological Obstacles to a Clutter-Free, Self-Empowered Environment

Some of us sweep tabletop clutter into bags and boxes, stashing them in closets or under tables, to be gone through and organized later.

Some of us have homes that are pretty clutter-free, but our garage is loaded top to bottom with boxes of things we haven't used or read in years.

And for some of us, there seems to be an obstacle course from the front door to the rest of the house.

Whatever the situation, continuing to live with packed and cluttered spaces can be a big energy drain. In fact, organizing your life is one of the kindest acts of self-care and self-empowerment there is.

Think about it: When things are organized, we spend less time looking for things, set a good example for our children, reduce overwhelm, do more with less time, make better use of our talents and skills, increase our self-confidence, feel more in control

and make more/spend less money.

There is no shortage of ideas and books on how to organize. Julie Morgenstern, in her book *Organizing from the Inside Out*, takes the "how to" a step further and suggests that to arrive at any kind of a sustaining system, we need to understand and work with or around our psycho-

logical obstacles to a clutter-free environment. Do you see

yourself in any of these obstacles?

**Need for accumulation.** People who need to keep a lot of everything around them may be filled with anxiety and dread at the idea of getting rid of things.

**Unclear goals and priorities.**

Organizing is about defining what's important and setting up a system to reflect that.

**Fear of success/fear of failure.**

Disorganization may be a convenient way to hold back.

**Need to retreat.** Clutter can be a protective shield to keep others at a safe distance.

**Fear of losing creativity.** A common myth is that creative, "right-brained" people need to work in chaos to produce high-quality work. Balderdash!

**Need for distraction.** Clutter can provide a convenient excuse to avoid uncomfortable issues or unwanted tasks. Especially true with bill paying.

**Sentimental attachment.** Infusing objects with personality, emotions and meaning ("That vase will be sad if I throw it out," or "We found that rock on our first date.") usually results in living with an enormous amount of clutter.

**Need for perfection.** Often, people won't deal with clutter until it can be done perfectly. Translation: It will never get done.

Identifying these obstacles can help us create an effective, lasting solution to clutter and free us from energy-sapping self-criticism. \*



Margaret Hood Black, MA, LPC  
 Licensed Professional Counselor  
 P.O. Box 5731  
 Kingwood, TX 77325  
 713-562-7819

Margaret is a Licensed Professional Counselor and psychotherapist. Margaret provides couple, individual and group therapy. In addition to working with adolescents and young adults, Margaret has a special interest in marriages, families and women's issues. Margaret has two offices conveniently located at: 1960 & SH 249 (NW Houston) and in Bellaire (Galleria Area). For more information on her services, please feel free to call: 713-562-7819.