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## What makes me feel nervous?

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At a workshop on enhancing self-awareness that I was facilitating, one vocal participant suddenly confronted a quiet participant, telling him under the guise of giving him feedback that the quiet person was not contributing to the group's proceedings and sought an explanation from him.

The quiet participant looked visibly shaken, and when asked how he felt when confronted, said he felt 'nervous'.

This led to some sharing on what made the person 'nervous'. An elderly participant then offered an explanation which rang true it seemed, for the participant and certainly did for me.

He said, and I paraphrase, "We become nervous when faced with uncertainty, for it raises in us irrational fear."

Irrational fear, he said, is caused by our emotional brain kicking in and causing us to balk at what we are faced with.

The famous actor Laurence Olivier once supposedly said, "Before even my three-hundred-and-fifty-first performance of Hamlet, I had butterflies in my stomach and felt nervous." His nervousness came from his uncertainty of how the audience would receive him.

I also realised that the nervousness that I tend to experience causes parts of me to shut down, particularly my rational brain, that can actually help me cope.

If I can face up to my fear and ask myself 'at worst what will happen', I will be able to reverse it, for I will know that the fear is only a figment of my imagination, and not caused by real or imminent danger..

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