Why do People Enjoy Feeling Fear?

Seamus Witt

As Halloween closes in, it's not unusual to watch horror movies, go to haunted houses, or partake in other fear-related festivities. Fear, in a survival sense, is the brain's way to keep you safe. It is a quick reaction to stimuli that we think is dangerous. So why do we actively chase things to make us afraid, to make us feel fear?

When your brain perceives danger, your fight or flight response will kick in, hopefully, helping you escape danger. When your fight or flight triggers everyday problems, it could leave you feeling anxious or irritable. On top of that, it makes your heart race. You might start sweating, an adrenaline rush. That adrenaline rush can feel good when you know you're not in real danger, such as when you enter a haunted house or start a horror movie. The effects of fear can take place without any risk. Upon doing something scary, you may feel a sense of accomplishment, as your brain tells you that you escaped danger, or faced your fears.

All those feelings point to why some people enjoy fear, and why Halloween leans into making you scared, because in the end, you know that there is nothing to harm you. At the same time, many aspects of Halloween don't try to scare you, allowing you to feel a sense of relief, had you done something out of your comfort zone.

Take this Halloween to enjoy everything as best you can, and don't be afraid to feel afraid from time to time. It could help you take your mind off things and allow you to focus on living in the moment. In the end fear is not a bad thing, it was always meant to be helpful, though it can sometimes be overwhelming. Not to some people, who chase the thrill it provides and the unexpected comfort that may come with.