

TAMING TIGERS

Do Things You Never Thought You Could

**{An extract of the first chapter for users of
the Taming Tigers App and
tamingtigers.com}**

Jim Lawless

'The antidote to self-help' – ***Richard Dunwoody, horseracing legend and polar explorer***

'A shrewd, inspiring and practical blueprint for anyone determined to find greater and deeper satisfactions in life' – ***Alec Wilkinson of the New Yorker***

'Engaging, challenging, inspiring and hilarious ... a practical, compelling model for achieving results' – ***Gary Hoffman, Group Vice-Chairman, Barclays Bank***

To be free
as wild animals are.
To dive naked as a dolphin,
Swift, silent, serene
into the depths of the sea.
To fly high up into the infinite blue of the sky,
And glide quietly over modern man's shabby world
To blend in with the air,
Or melt into the water,
Becoming one with Nature
And re-discovering the 'Self'.
This is my motto

Jacques Mayol, the first human being to dive to 100 metres on a single breath and the inspiration behind Luc Besson's film The Big Blue, 1988)

To the Horse and to the Sea.

To Maddie and Gee

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Foreword

Taming Tigers is an important book. Life is for living – and living well. Taming Tigers is all about setting ourselves free to do just that – at work or at home.

Taming Tigers is the antidote to ‘self-help’. For one thing, the approach is completely practical. If you follow the Ten Rules you’ll find very few ‘short cuts’ but a lot of excitement and challenge and opportunities to surprise yourself. But also Jim lives the philosophy. He doesn’t just talk about it.

I rode nearly 2000 winners during my career including success in two Grand Nationals and a Cheltenham Gold Cup. I still hold the record for the number of racecourse falls – six hundred and seventy-two! Every day I rode there were Tigers to be tamed but nothing compared with the Tigers that attacked when I was told by an American kinesiologist, out of the blue, that my career was over. After seventeen years working on a racetrack, I was immediately running a business – sat in an office for twelve hours a day. That was a far bigger personal challenge than riding Desert Orchid around any racecourse.

Facing change, whether we choose it or it chooses us, is a huge test but also a huge opportunity. And the battle is won or lost in our heads. This book unravels that battle and equips us to win it.

Racehorses are a handful. And the few people who make it to ride in public on a racecourse have generally worked for many years with easier animals before they take a racehorse on. Their highly strung nature, coupled with their strength and speed, makes sitting on their backs, even on the gallops, an acquired taste. There is no brake, just ‘negotiation’ and if they decide they’ve had enough of you, more than likely you’re off!

When I first heard about a man from London who had arrived in Lambourn and was falling off and being run away with around the neighbourhood, I didn’t fancy his chances. When Jim got in contact and asked me to help I couldn’t resist and it was great to help him set his own record – fastest jockey from non-rider to track – and to be part of proving Taming Tigers.

Early in 2008, to support Sparks, Racing Welfare and another charity close to my heart, Spinal Research, Doug Stoup, an American guide, and I completed a route from the coast of Antarctica to the Geographic South Pole that had only been completed in tractors and Sno-cats some fifty years ago. We became the seventieth and seventy-first people to reach the South Pole un-resupplied and without animal, machine or wind assistance. Our expedition was, without doubt, the toughest challenge I have ever taken on.

Having seen Jim speak a few weeks before I left the UK, I had his voice and Rule 10 ringing in my ears as things began to get really tough as we neared the Pole. Never Give Up!

I'll be continuing to attempt to tame my Tigers and I wish you every success with taming yours. Rule 1 - Act boldly today. Who knows where it could lead you.

Richard Dunwoody MBE

Three Times Champion Jockey,
Polar Explorer and Author

Introduction

The Ten Rules for Taming Tigers is a re-structuring and a re-statement of truths that you already know. I didn't invent these Ten Rules, but I did observe them, experience them experiment with them and gather them together as a weapon against the Tiger. I have also done my best to prove them by putting myself in some tricky situations with only the Ten Rules for company. I've now put them into a guidebook which I hope is useful to you and which gives the great adversary in our heads a name – 'the Tiger'.

Most 'self-help' books promise to tell the reader how to live. Many suggest that you 'can do anything you put your mind to'. I have no idea how you should live and I am quite sure that humans cannot do 'anything' they put their minds to. I will never leap a building in a single bound, will you? So I was very happy when Richard Dunwoody described Taming Tigers as "the antidote to 'self help'".

I do believe that the meaning of life is whatever you make it. *Taming Tigers* is an invitation to move past your natural fears of change and growth in order to make of life something that is meaningful to you and that you can enjoy, share and be proud of. No more, no less.

I've been privileged to share the Ten Rules for Taming Tigers with over 200,000 people through keynote addresses and major corporate change programmes around the world. Now you can join our online community, use our finely tuned coaching tools and gain encouragement and advice from others in our Campus at tamingtigers.com. The Taming Tigers Campus is entirely free to join and to use.

The stories of people, on the Campus and in this book, who have used the Ten Rules, tamed their Tigers and achieved great things convince me that we're on to something worthwhile here.

Tiger taming never stops. So I wish you every success in taming your Tigers and I ask you to wish me the same with mine. Please share your experiences in the Campus to help me improve the Ten Rules and to encourage others to make the leap and tame their Tigers.

Jim Lawless

Berkshire, England

July 2011

Bring Out Your Dead!

Seven thirty on a June morning in 1998. Bang on time, Richard walked into the office. I was sitting, invisible to anybody else, in my partitioned 'pod' in the large open-plan office of the IT multinational where I was employed as an international legal counsel. Richard gave an audible groan and said to the apparently empty office: 'Oh well, only four years, two months, three weeks and two days to go.' I stopped working on the contract and did a quick calculation. I had thirty-four years, five months and a few days to go – if I could afford to retire at sixty-five, that is.

The office complex where I worked in unfashionable Slough, to the west of London, was good for the motorways and Heathrow airport but little else. Slough did me a life-changing favour, though. My desk was by a window on the ground floor, next to a side street. Somewhere nearby was a funeral parlour. Every morning as I started work the hearses would come past me bearing their loads. Every lunchtime they would return empty. This, along with my calculation that I had nearly thirty-five years of my sentence still to run, got me thinking: 'What if this is as good as it gets?'

The genie was out of the bottle. If this was my life, what on earth was I doing with it? When was it going to get started? At twenty-nine, maybe it already had. I had spent six years training as a lawyer and in five years of practice had moved from the City to international IT. The stark reality was that I had not enjoyed many work days during that time.

The terrifying truth was becoming apparent. I had to make a change. The Tiger began to roar at me to stay put. Battle commenced.

A year later Optimise (now Taming Tigers) was born. Initially, we taught business people to inspire their audiences rather than club them with tedium when making presentations. We were soon invited to support leaders of large companies who needed to inspire their people to face up to change.

One fateful day, the telephone rang; the caller was inviting me to give a motivational presentation. I immediately refused. I thought that loud razzmatazz American-style speeches were an appalling idea. I had nothing to speak about in any case.

The caller was persistent: 'Do it better if you don't like the American style.' Fair comment. I accepted the job.

Speech day came. I was to deliver sixty minutes of motivational genius. After thirty minutes I thanked the audience and bowed to their slightly surprised applause. I'd been so nervous that I'd missed out great chunks of material – all carefully timed at

home to meet the required hour – and I'd stood there, mute, with thirty minutes still left to go. To my amazement, as I tried to get out of the place one of the audience members approached me, said how much she had enjoyed it and asked if I would polish it up and deliver it again in a month's time.

The Tiger roared again ...

The Story of Your Life

You are writing the story of your life. You must be, mustn't you? Who else could possibly be holding the pen? You are writing a sentence of your story now, as you read this book. I am writing a sentence of my story now, as I write these words to you. Our stories are about to collide through these sentences of ours, the decisions that I have taken to write these words and the decisions you are about to take having read them. You and I are very similar when we come to the subject of the Tiger, as we shall discover.

If you have the good fortune to be living in the free world, you are the one writing the story of your life. The very beginning of your story was dictated by genetics and environment, of course. Later, you made of that what you chose to make of it. No excuses. You and I took our decisions, acted accordingly and got our results. We're still doing that today.

Your story is the sum of all of the decisions you have made so far. That is how you write your story.

You take decisions that lead to actions that lead to results: the results are sentences in your story.

You decided that you would try for that exam, but not for this one. You decided to go for this job, but that they wouldn't consider you for that one. You decided to push this little idea through at work but perhaps you decided not to risk that big career-making idea. You decided to say hello to this beautiful person one fine day, but not that one. Now you are married to this one – *and you never even spoke to that one?*

Think about it! You decided to attend that social gathering – but not the more intimidating one the day before. You decided to speak with this attractive person, not that one. You decided to ask them on a date or to accept their invitation. You decided to show up on the date. You wake up thirty years later with three teenage children and a caravan. It makes you think about the consequences of these critical little decisions without which the big ones do not present themselves, doesn't it? Where they your decisions or the Tiger's?

How you take these decisions, whether they are taken to write your own meaningful story or merely to avoid the Tiger's roar, is what this book will help you to explore.

So here is the question for you. The only one that matters to you and me at the moment.

How much of your story so far is yours, the one you wanted to write, and how much of your story is a second-rate, fear-bound tale – dictated by the Tiger?

Your Story at Work

This book is primarily about the story you are writing at work. Your work is probably the greatest adventure of your life after the one involving family and friends. Do you agree? Perhaps it is currently the greatest adventure for you. Perhaps it does not feel like an adventure at all at present – we'll change that together if you are willing to accept the challenge. Work is an arena in which we can all come to know ourselves, discover who we really are, connect with and impact upon others, find opportunities for growth and development, make a difference to many and create a legacy. It is also the arena in which many people sleep. *Taming Tigers* is an invitation to wake up and a set of practical tools with which to live the adventure.

You live in a uniquely prosperous, healthy and opportunity-filled moment in the history of mankind. Your potential to connect across the globe is greater than ever before. You live in a time of great change in industry where meritocracy, recognising and rewarding performance, is becoming daily more important and urgent. This is a time when the creativity of the individual is valued at work more than ever before, when you can create your own opportunities – when 'they' need you to create the opportunities. I have gone into detail on this change in the Appendix to this book.

Whatever age you are, there has never been a better time to wake up, enter the New Economy and ride the wave of change to your advantage. Another advantage you have is that you are reading this book. Many will not bother to. They already know 'how it all works'. Their 'Rulebook' has been compiled to their satisfaction. They use that as an excuse to remain asleep. Their Tiger is at work, saving them from taking a chance, saving them from their fear of humility and of admitting and embracing uncertainty, saving them from the fear and discomfort of growth and achievement. Saving them from the tools that you and I will be employing to live our adventures.

Let's you and I not slumber with them.

Who is writing your story? You or your Tiger?

What Is the Tiger?

The Tiger is the thing within you that stops you acting. But you knew that already, didn't you? The Tiger roars at you when you consider doing or saying something that

will require you moving into unknown waters, taking a personal risk, living your adventure.

Why do I refer to this universal internal force as the Tiger? Because it often feels real and external. Because it is a big and powerful presence. Because it is loud, even louder at night, and seems to have real teeth. Because it feels as if our very survival may be at stake when we encounter it. Because it causes our adrenaline to be released and this makes our physiology and our thought processes alter in a very real way. Because we want to flee from it unless we are prepared for the battle.

The Tiger is a metaphor, of course. It isn't really there. You created it yourself, therefore you can tame it. Many people have moved past it and you can, too. This book will give you the weapons to combat the Tiger, but you will have to go into battle yourself. Only you can defeat your Tiger. That is where this book will differ from 'self-help' books. There are no quick fixes. You are the guru, not me. I've simply been down the path and I'd like to share the lessons I learned. I'd like to hear what you have learned, too. Contact me through the Taming Tigers Campus online and we can swap notes.

The sleepy folk don't refer to this as their Tiger. They know that they can justify, intellectually why they do not move beyond the impasse. It's nothing internal for them – they will look for and blame external forces at work to stymie them. They are merely victims of the cruel world. They can list all the reasons why they could not do something. They never allow others (or themselves) to see that they are actually justifying a lack of action caused by fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of getting it wrong. Fear of the responsibility of getting it right, fear of the effort involved in living fully. They will never know the great reward of being awake either.

This book is not about 'Success!!' in the tired, self-help sense. It is not about making more money or achieving the perfect relationship, although it will help you to grow and achieve both. Nor is it about affirmations or mantras. The book does not include a CD that claims to change your life while you are asleep – I believe that is tosh, designed to exploit the desperate. I'm banking on you being smarter than that. If that's what you're after, return this book to the bookshop before you crease the cover or break the spine and get your money back.

The Tiger in Action

Let me give you an example of the Tiger in action from my own experiences. I wanted to set a new British freediving record. I was (and am) intrigued by the sport; I love being in the water and feel strangely at home by, on or in the sea. I had taken some lessons as a tourist on holiday. I believed that I could step up a gear and

thought that that would be an excellent way of testing Taming Tigers theories. But I kept putting off making a commitment – that is the moment of making an unbreakable promise to myself – that I would attempt the record. The reason for the hesitation was fear – but not the fear that you might expect. I was not afraid of the depth or of the risks. I knew that I would work slowly through the depths, becoming comfortable at each as I trained.

I run a successful business and I have a family. The fear was of striking a line through the first week of my diary for every month from February to August 2010. The first week would have to be spent in Egypt training in deep, still water. Time would have to be spent away from family and from work – and that meant a reduction of a quarter of my monthly income, during a global downturn, for eight months. Would we be OK? Would we pay the bills? Would my competitors win work and a reputation that I should have won? Would my clients tolerate my absence? Decision time. The battle raged. Would the Tiger win? Intriguing. I had to dig deep and use the Ten Rules that I will shortly introduce you to in order to move past the Tiger and achieve the record.

Meet Your Tiger

Here's a question for you: how often do you dream about the great things that you would like to do with your life? Really. Think about it. Daily? Weekly?

How often do you have great ideas relating to work that you are quietly confident that you could implement? Ideas about:

- the people you would like to spend time with – developing and nurturing their talent and confidence
- the time you would like to spend creating the vision and the strategy
- the technological innovations you think should be explored
- the processes that need re-engineering
- the clients you think could benefit from your organisation's expertise
- the ways you could earn more money
- the staff that need to be inspired and communicated with and given the opportunity to contribute to the greater plan
- the work that you would like to delegate (that great Tiger-tickling leap of trust) to give you time to do this

What about the ideas to reduce environmental impact, to create more social good as a result of the business's activities, to lobby governments and create positive change for your industry, for society? What about the plan to strike out on your own – to prove that you can do it better, as you so often think you can?

Why is it so rare for you actually to do anything about it?

Have you ever found yourself in conversation – with yourself or with others – about your plan and heard yourself say something along the lines of:

- yes, it is a great idea and I could probably pull it off, but the wife/husband would never let me go for it
- yes, but it might go wrong and then what would happen?
- some chance: people with my education/background don't get opportunities like that
- do you think for one moment that [insert name of senior person] would let me actually do something like that?
- that's just not how we do it round here – 'they' wouldn't go for it
- not until the mortgage is paid and the kids have left home
- I saw [insert name of person] try that x years ago – his career never recovered
- smarter men and women than me have tried and failed
- at my age? You can't teach an old dog new tricks
- any variant of "I'm too busy"

If you have ever said any of these things without first having a long conversation with the wife, husband or boss or the person who failed, without preparing the business plan for your innovation and presenting it quietly to trusted colleagues for advice, without questioning why, exactly, this is the 'way we do things around here', without working out what would happen if it went wrong and whether the risk is manageable and so on, then, yes: you *have* met your Tiger.

Your Tiger dictates that you avoid these preparatory explorations. It roars at you to stop. And the reason why you make the decision you make is fear. Fear of entering the unfamiliar. Fear that it may be possible. Fear that the effort may be uncomfortable. Fear that we may discover that there is no barrier except our Tiger. If we admit that then there would be nowhere to hide, would there? Time to get on

with it or to admit that you are not big enough to try; and then have the decency to shut up about it. Ouch!

Why Have I Written *Taming Tigers*?

The Ten Rules for Taming Tigers will bring you greater success in many areas, certainly. But that is not why I have become fascinated with them, tested them rigorously and now locked myself away to write them down for you. Let me tell you the reason: we all have a great story to write, a path to follow, one that is unique to us. Most of us never find out what it is because of the Tiger's roar. That is a tragedy and I believe that *Taming Tigers* is one powerful route to avoiding that tragedy.

One day you and I may be in a nursing home somewhere. Let's go there together for a moment.

You're ninety years old. Your life is a little less frenetic. You have less paper left on which to write your story. You have less ink in your pen. You won't be writing with the same vigour in those distant days as you can at the moment. Perhaps your biggest concerns as you wander off to breakfast in the morning will be: 'Will I win at cards today?' 'Did I remember to put any pants on?' and 'Do I smell of wee?'

Wouldn't it be devastating to look at that old character in the mirror – you – and say, after seventy or eighty years of sheer, incredible opportunity, 'What was the problem? Why didn't I wake up? Why didn't I do it? Why didn't I get involved?' The question in the nursing home will not be '*Did I have a great story in me?*' We all have a great story in us. It will be: '*Did I write my story or did I let my Tiger dictate my story to me?*'

What do you have to do today (that's right, *you* and *do* and *today* – wake up, it's happening now) to know that when you face that old man or woman in the mirror you can grin devilishly? To say, after eighty long years of opportunity and possibility: '*I lived! I got out there and made an impact. I made a difference. I lived my life to the full. I wrote my own great story. I loved, I won, I lost. There is nothing to regret. I was awake!*'

I have created and written down the Ten Rules for Taming Tigers because I firmly believe that each of us has a powerful story to write and that these Ten Rules liberate us to take our own decisions and to write it.

I believe that every person who looks back with regret and sadness at what might have been, who dies with their story unwritten, is a great loss to our collective story: to humanity. The impact of people at their daily work is the single largest influence

on both humanity and the planet. You have a part to play. A story to write. Your story.

And your story will touch many thousands of others.

I believe that there is a clear, identifiable difference between those who will look back at a great story and those who will look back full of regret, or perhaps still be playing the resentful, deluded victim.

One set tamed the Tiger and acted. The others let the Tiger dictate their story to them.

Wake up! The Tiger has no teeth. It is a brilliant, powerful trick of the mind. Your mind. You are in charge of it. *You can change it.*

How Can I Be So Sure that *Taming Tigers* Will Help You Write Your Story?

The Ten Rules are different from 'self-help' ideas because, before committing them to paper for you, I have tested them rigorously. I have tested them in my own business activities running the Taming Tigers group; in the boardrooms of major organisations; in schools; in my journey to the racetrack on horseback and in my quest to become Britain's deepest freediver. I will share my stories in this book to help you see how the rules can work. People who have been touched by *Taming Tigers* have also been generous in sharing their own stories, all motivated by the desire to pass on to you what they have learned and gained from the Ten Rules.

I've been privileged to deliver Taming Tigers as a keynote presentation to more than 200,000 people around the world. I've been trusted as an adviser to hundreds of individuals and teams and boards within companies from all sectors in the twelve years since I established Taming Tigers (then called Optimise). My team and I have refined the Ten Rules as a result of our experiences. Here are some of the realisations that I see time and time again when people are introduced to the Tiger:

- I now see that it's not because of my background/education ...
- I *do* have time to do these things – the Tiger stops me trusting and delegating!
- I can communicate effectively – the Tiger made me scared to try – it was easier to say 'I just can't'
- it's not the boss's fault after all. When I prepared carefully and I had a 'real' conversation with her – it was fine

- they actually *want* me to be a full-time leader – not to micromanage them – that’ll make my life so much easier and more stimulating – but a hard habit to break
- I thought I had reached the top of my game – but I haven’t, I had reached the extent of my imagination – I’ve just seen a whole new level to play in!

Taming Tigers is different because it does not attempt to hide the hard graft and scary moments associated with writing your story and creating your successes. No short cuts here. I have attempted to deal with reality, not what is ‘nice’ to hear.

There is one caveat, however. From this book knowledge is available – but not wisdom. Wisdom is not acquired by reading. Wisdom is what results when you incorporate this knowledge into your personal experience. You are the only one who can create that fusion and bring yourself greater wisdom. You have to experience your Tiger, experience facing up to it and, eventually, taming it. The sooner we start you off doing that, the more chance there is that your encounter with this book will lead to great adventures in your life – and not merely to another trophy on your bookshelf.

What Do Riding on the Racetrack and Freediving Have to Do with You or with Work?

Both of those challenges were far more mental than they were physical. Freediving is the only extreme sport in which an adrenaline rush will kill you. A sudden panic at 100 metres means that you will use the oxygen in your system very quickly – far too quickly for you to make it to the surface before it runs out. A racehorse will detect any other animal pumping adrenaline on its back before the animal knows it has released adrenaline. Just think ‘fear’ and it’ll bolt with you.

Both sports are excellent ways of experimenting with how the mind and the body work and interact under pressure. But there are a great many other similarities with your challenge of moving forward in the workplace that have made them an excellent testing ground for the Ten Rules. Here is a selection:

1. Cold-calling influential strangers and asking for help with an innovative, risky project.
2. Slowly building relationships with people who don’t initially want to welcome you.
3. Dealing with the fear of public, career-damaging failure.
4. Dealing with a fear of real financial loss.

5. Committing to a goal with no certainty as to its success – but with a personal cost attached.
6. Creating a plan, changing it as you meet obstacles and sticking to the task to the end.
7. Deciding upon new behaviours and sticking to those with discipline.
8. Time management (I still had to pay the mortgage).
9. Juggling family commitments.
10. Being creative and innovative about how to hit a goal that ‘they all’ said was not possible.
11. Innovating – nobody had done either thing before from my starting point.
12. Building and motivating a team of people far wiser than me to support me.
13. Keeping myself motivated to the end and through the down times.
14. Being personally accountable for success.
15. A wonderful, inspiring prize at stake, that is meaningful for you.

Who Is Writing Your Story? – You or the Tiger?

As we work together over the next hours, days or weeks, you will begin to understand the Tiger that you and your experiences have created much more clearly than you do at this stage. And as we work together, you will also begin to see the damage that the Tiger is doing and you will, I hope, start to get angry.

Yes, I did say ‘angry’. Anger isn’t a taboo word. Understood and used properly, anger can be a tremendous springboard to a new chapter in your story and a new approach to your work and wider life. As you begin to see the effect of the Tiger on the years that have passed so far – on the story that has been written to date, however fabulous and successful it is – you will see areas, perhaps small but none the less significant, where the Tiger has dictated and you have diligently written what it commanded. And that will create an emotion. Use it well.

I was taking some air on a lovely summer's afternoon having delivered a presentation to around a thousand people in Amsterdam. One of those attending the presentation was particularly keen to say hello and he followed me out on to the lawn. After saying some kind things about the presentation, he told me how lucky I was and how jealous he was of me.

'Why?' I asked.

'Because I have always wanted to be a professional speaker and to inspire others for a living.'

'No, you haven't,' I replied.

He looked stunned. 'Yes, I have! I have always wanted to.'

'No, you haven't,' I said again. 'If you had always wanted to do that for a living you would be doing it. You are doing *exactly* what you want to do for a living.'

He was getting angry now. Clearly, I was supposed to have massaged his ego here.

'That's easy for you to say, you have a story to tell.'

'Sure, but I didn't when I started speaking. And many speakers don't use their personal story.'

'Yeah, but I guess it's different if you are a corporate lawyer first and make your pile before taking a risk on speaking.'

'Well, sorry to disappoint you, but I wasn't a good enough lawyer to have made any money by the age of twenty-nine, which is when I changed tack!'

I gave him my number and an invitation to call whenever he wanted to ask me any questions on getting started in the career he had always wanted to pursue.

He never called, of course. Poor guy: the Tiger ate his story for tea.

Shall We Be Honest with Each Other as We Journey Together?

Honesty will be important during our time together over the coming days. I will be honest with you and not write anything that I cannot back up from personal experience. If you are willing to be courageously honest with yourself, you will see a change. You will meet yourself in a new way. You will wake up.

So let's be honest. If you truly believe that race, upbringing, religion, educational qualifications, gender, the mortgage, the wife/husband, the kids, the boss, the organisation you work for or the country you live in are the reasons why you are

'unable' to do the things that you want to do, then you need to tame your Tiger. Perhaps today, this very day, is the first day of your new life, the one on which you will choose to start being truly honest with yourself about why you are where you are.

Shall we end this section together with some truly courageous honesty and face another taboo subject?

You will die. I will die. That is the correct starting point for our journey together. Only from that starting point can we gain real perspective and then begin to give ourselves permission truly to live; to write our own story. Because from that perspective, my fear of missing out on a few week's income to try for a freediving record, or your fear of implementing your innovative plan at work in case you publicly fail, become quite laughable, don't they? What are we actually worried about?

What are we waiting for?

Let's live!

