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This paper explores the significance fear plays, or does not play, in the practice of envisioning. Envisioning is seen as a powerful tool in the delivery of education for sustainable development, for it seeks to engage people in imagining and creating a better future. However, drawing on work undertaken with undergraduate students at the University of Glamorgan, South Wales, we argue that envisioning relies upon ‘absent fear’: it works to suppress, or make absent, fear as a valid response to present and future development. The presence of ‘absent fear’, we suggest, poses a barrier to fully engaging with the challenges and opportunities of a sustainable future, for it is difficult to conceive of a positive vision without first acknowledging and confronting our fears. It is in articulating fear, we observe, that people are more able to respond to the challenges of the future in hopeful and creative ways. Utilising work undertaken with our students this paper revisits envisioning and suggests the need to understand envisioning as a broader process of reflection and action.

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