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Break Out of Your Comfort Zone

By Mastercoach, Eric Adler



Many people ask themselves why their lives don't get better. They go along, day in and day out, just waiting and hoping to become happier, more successful and more satisfied with their lives. But, the answer is simple: Their lives don't get better because they don't get better.

Have you ever thought about what your life would be like if you could turn back time by 10 years? If you could redo some of your actions or avoid saying some of the things you said, how would your life be different? Or, what if you had forced yourself to do something you once didn't have the heart to do? How would your life look today?

The truth is, all in all, everything would be the same as it is today!

Naturally you would correct some of the actions you now regret, but you would still have to deal with unfavorable situations. Of course you wouldn't make the same mistakes you made then, but you would make different ones. And then 10 years later – today – you would feel as satisfied or unsatisfied or as successful or unsuccessful as you are today.

Consider this formula: Who you are and how well do today is the result of your present personality. If you want to feel more satisfied in your private domain or if you want to be more successful in your current job, the best (and only) way to do it is by advancing your personality. However, this isn't necessarily an easy feat. If you decide to take the next step, it will be challenging – but you will be greatly rewarded.

The comfort zone

Everything you know is your comfort zone. You can divide this zone into four parts:

geographical, mental, activity-related, and personal.

Let's say you are at home in your living room; this means you are within your geographical comfort zone. If you're in a place where you have never been before, you are outside of your geographical comfort zone. If friends surround you, you are within your personal comfort zone, and if strangers surround you, you are outside of your personal comfort zone. If you do something you have been doing your whole life, like a card game you grew up with, this is within your activity-related comfort zone, and if you do something brand new, you are outside of your activity-related comfort zone. If you think about something you are familiar with, like job tasks you do on a daily basis, you are within your mental comfort zone, but if you think like you have never done before, you are outside of your mental comfort zone.

But now comes the critical question, so make sure to answer honestly: Where do you prefer to be? Within your comfort zone, or outside of it? Ninety five percent of people feel more comfortable within their comfort zone, and you probably fall into that category; this is absolutely fine!

But why do most people feel better within their comfort zone? The explanation is simple, yet frightening: Humans are born with an innate, primary instinct that continues to control our lives, yet it is no longer necessary to our survival.

A very long time ago, humans were only able to survive as gregarious animals, and therefore, Mother Nature gave us the appropriate herd instinct: Never leave your comfort zone, because that's your safe

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place. Danger impends when you leave your comfort zone.

This is why most people spend their entire lives within their comfort zones, desiring more of the same and occasionally wishing for better. Because you already know everything within your comfort zone, unfortunately personality development is only possible if you step outside of it.

Now you know what needs to be done; how can you step outside your comfort zone?

Let's take another look at the four parts of the comfort zone: geographical, mental, activity-related, and personal. First, you should never leave all of the parts at the same time; at least one part should remain familiar to you. You either need to be familiar with the action, the people you are with, the content, or the place you are in. Staying familiar with one part of your comfort zone will provide you with support and security to develop yourself in the other areas.

Take small steps

It's important to consider the size of the steps you take in this process. Some experts advise big steps, but unfortunately this has been proven counterproductive. Here's why: Imagine your comfort zone as point 'A.' Any time you move more than three feet off point 'A,' you encounter a padded wall that completely surrounds you. If you try to break out of the padded wall all at once, you will bounce back to where you started. After a couple more unpleasant and non-productive attempts, you will eventually give up.

Unfortunately, the "breaking out of your comfort zone" method is taught and practiced frequently. You get highly motivated and very enthusiastic, but after a short time the motivation turns into frustration and resignation – *I can't do anything about it, I have tried it but it just isn't working out.* Nobody pays attention to the padded wall.

The only way to be successful in this transition is to take small steps. It's important for you to make the new activity, new place, new people, or new way of thinking your habit – these things will now belong to your comfort zone. Then, you will make the next small step out of your already-growing comfort zone. Development takes time.

Consistency

Once you have taken a small step outside a certain area of your comfort zone, it's important you never go back into your old one. Stay consistent, no matter how unnatural you feel; you have to follow this rule until you know and feel comfortable with everything.

Start now

Here is an easy exercise to help start you on the road to success: From now on, try to smile anytime and every time. Smile when you answer the phone, when you pass people on the street, when you read your e-mails, when you're exercising! Initially, you might feel a bit insecure. Your smile may seem cramped and fake, but you have stay out of your comfort zone. One day, your smile will become a habit, and you won't even notice it any-

more. As an added benefit, you will notice a lot of people smiling back!

Follow these steps and your personality will continue to grow and develop as your comfort zone does – your success and satisfaction will grow, as well. **GB**

(*Translated by Anja Strejcek).

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"I'm not planning. I live day by day."

