

Step Out of Your Personal Comfort Zone

What are the things that you believe are worth doing but you find yourself afraid of doing because of the potential for disappointment or failure? Below are some tips to enable you to step out of your comfort zone:

Be Honest With Yourself - Identify Your Excuses and Rationalizations

When you turned down that opportunity, was it really because you didn't have the time, or because you were afraid to fail? Take an inventory of the excuses you tend to make about avoiding situations outside your comfort zone.

Ask Others for Perspective and Insights

Others that you trust can help you identify your discomfort zone. Just ask: "I'm working on identifying areas of discomfort. What are my discomfort zones that you think I need to address?"

Become Familiar with Your Discomfort

You know your discomfort well, but it is time to explore it differently. Ask yourself what are the most challenging areas for me in a particular situation? What are the prices I am paying? How my life / career would look if I felt comfortable in these situations?

Find Your Comfort in the Discomfort

Find a version of the situation that makes you feel less discomfort. For example, if you dislike public speaking, but feel slightly more comfortable in small groups, look for opportunities to speak with smaller groups. We can often find a way to tweak what we have to do to make it good enough to perform by sculpting situations in a way that minimizes discomfort.

Make the Behavior Your Own

There is no single perfect way to perform the particular behavior you're working on. In most of the situations, you can find a way to customize or personalize your behavior so you are effective in the new situation while not feeling like you're losing yourself in the process.

Look for Opportunities to Practice

Recognize opportunities to practice your version of the behavior. If you don't have enough opportunities – initiate them. See if you can consult with a close friend or a colleague to offer advice and encouragement in advance of a challenging situation.

Take the Plunge

Put mechanisms in place that will force you to dive in, and you might discover that what you initially feared isn't as bad as you thought. Commit to some activities and put them in your calendar. Without this mechanism of forcing you into action, you might never have taken the plunge.

Find a Mentor or Coach

Even with a solid plan and a revitalized sense of purpose, a good source of help, courage, inspiration, and feedback can seal the deal. It can be a professional coach, but doesn't have to be. A thoughtful and encouraging colleague or friend can also take this role.

You May Stumble, but That's OK

In fact, it's the only way you'll learn, especially if you can appreciate that missteps are an inevitable – and in fact essential – part of the learning process.

No one likes to move beyond their comfort zone, but that's really where the magic happens. It's where we can grow, learn, and develop in a way that expands our horizons beyond what we thought was possible.