



## Comfort Zones

A Comfort Zone is a situation whereby a person feels at ease, safe, and sure; it can be a path of least resistance, coasting, or can be a settled method of working that requires little effort and yields only barely acceptable results—overall, it is a short-term strategy to living. Sure, many responsibilities can be fulfilled, but excitement and challenges are minimised. It's called comfort for a reason as there is no pressure to work hard and demands and stress are low to zero. Furthermore, Comfort Zones provide a great deal of control and sense of certainty—that's attractive, especially if you are finding it hard to cope with life, work, relationships, people, etc.; there is a draw to stay within a "Comfortable Comfort Zone".

Often, we can find things comfortable because they represent what we already know, even if these things are hurtful. Other times, we can start to feel restless or low in our regular ways of living and doing things; life can become bland and unfulfilling as there is no to low levels of novelty or achievement and whilst demands are low stress can increase. Remaining in Comfort Zones can lead to frustration and perhaps even bitterness as life becomes mediocre at best. If you are thinking that your remaining within your Comfort Zone is holding you back or that life is becoming stale or stagnant, you are probably right (and certainly not alone) because Comfort Zones provide no personal improvement, enrichment, enhancement, or growth; eventually, our Comfort Zones become "Uncomfortable Comfort Zones" instead.

If you accept that we have a drive within us to improve and/or find purpose in life then getting out of (Uncomfortable/Comfortable) Comfort Zones is tantamount to living well. Growth requires risking, challenging, and pushing ourselves beyond that with which we are comfortable. It is therefore necessary to embrace discomfort and uncertainty to achieve our goals, to learn, and to reach our potential and to live a freer, richer, and more present life. Although this can be scary, this healthier way to live ought to be navigated with acceptable and educated risks (as opposed to being overly-cautious or reckless). Specifically, whereas we can take a risk and it can be scary, new, and uncomfortable, we can also harness our self-belief and self-efficacy in knowing that we have prepared, have had similar experiences, have trust, and/or know that we haven't taken on too much. Such can maximise self-belief and minimise levels of stress whilst increasing demands leaving us in a "Comfortable Discomfort Zone".

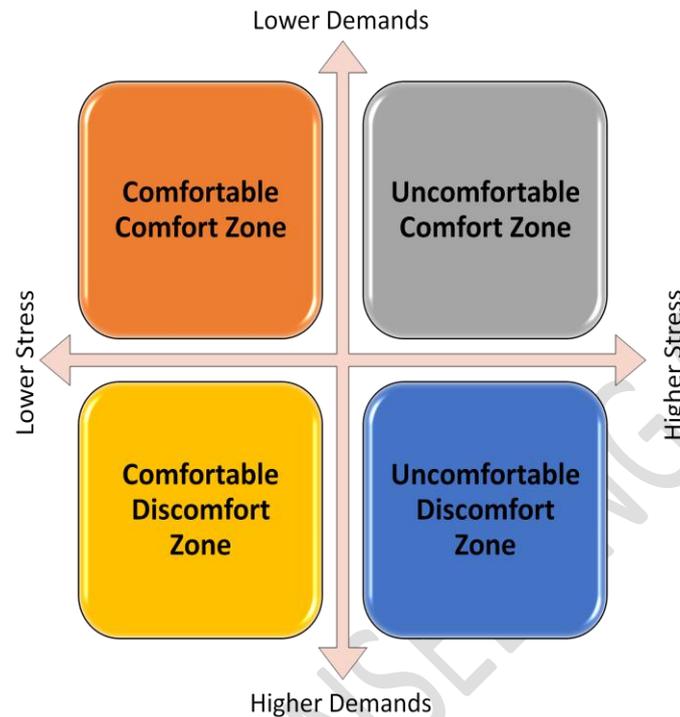
Whilst it is important to stretch ourselves, the risk is that we stretch ourselves too far. A novel situation can have lots of hidden gems as well as hidden dangers which could leave us anxious, overwhelmed, or hurt; especially if we are unprepared, hasty, or inattentive in our actions and lacking self-belief. Such increases levels of stress and demands and can leave us in an "Uncomfortable Discomfort Zone" but it can be minimised by preparation, practice, and knowing oneself...and even if we do reach this zone, some of the unpleasantness can provide useful information about oneself, others, and how to be in the future.

Consider the following points about Comfort Zones:

1. Comfort Zones are Habit Zones; try new activities, routines, travel routes, venues, and people.
2. Leave your Comfort Zone more often; start small, stretch yourself in acceptable and safe amounts.
3. Consider and adapt your idea of what Comfort Zone means to you personally.
4. Embrace discomfort, it's normal and healthy to be uncomfortable when doing new or challenging things.
5. Working through discomfort expands your Comfort Zone and personal growth.
6. Things with which you are now comfortable were once uncomfortable.
7. If you are comfortable you are not growing.
8. Have the courage to be vulnerable.
9. Find a compelling reason to step out of your Comfort Zone.
10. Neither abandon nor permanently reside in your Comfort Zone!



The first picture attempts to encapsulate the information above highlighting the different zones of comfort or discomfort. The second picture is a worksheet to help focus attention on where you can push and challenge yourself to break out of comfort zones to harness personal growth without it being overwhelming. Complete each section A to E for aspects of your life that needs attention.



A .....		.....A
B .....		.....B
C .....		.....C
D .....		.....D
E .....		.....E

A .....		.....A
B .....		.....B
C .....		.....C
D .....		.....D
E .....		.....E