A person with long hair

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How to Leave the Comfort Zone

(#2 of 2)

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Well hello Friends. I hope you had an amazing week!

In last week’s episode, we talked about the four zones of growth. And for that, I referred to a super helpful infographic that shows how the four zones relate to each other. It’s posted on my Instagram, and we’ll be referring to that again in today’s episode, so be sure to go check that out @thepurposefulcareer.

Last episode, we also talked about the things we think and feel in each zone, how the zones relate to the other and how, over the course of our lives, we go through these four zones again and again. Basically, whenever we pursue a big new goal or go after something new and big, we go through these four zones of growth. And each time we try something new, go through these four zones, we become more confident in our ability to try and master new things. The fear zone basically becomes less of a ‘thing’ for us because as we get comfortable working our way through the uncertainty and awkwardness of trying something new, most of us find a way to reframe the fear.

Which is mostly a fear of failure, right? We’ve never done the thing before so that fear zone is all about what we’re making failure mean. We’ll talk more about this in a minute, but it’s important to remember.

We also talked a lot about the Comfort Zone. It’s the great seducer. Because the truth is, this is where most people stay.

It’s why we quit on our new year’s resolutions. It’s why we don’t stick with the diet or workout routine. It’s why we stay in that job or career path we hate or the relationship we don’t want instead of going after something new.

The comfort zone seduces us because it’s the warm and cozy place where we feel safe and in control. Where we know what to expect. Where we know how to do all the things. And it’s the place where we never have to feel the discomfort or awkwardness we inevitably feel when we attempt something new.

We don’t have to deal with failure in the comfort zone. So many times, we can make the mistake of believing that this means we “should” stay in the comfort zone. And most people do.

But as I shared last week, the comfort zone is the place where passion goes to die. Stay too long in a job you hate and see where that gets you. You might be comfortable but you’re probably miserable too. Because somewhere inside, you know you really want to do something different or next level.

The comfort zone holds us back because it keeps us from trying new things. Which prevents us from growing and learning. Our world stays small and familiar which in a way can be soothing. But at the same time, we also know that it’s preventing us from living up to our full potential.

So today we’re going to talk about Leaving the Comfort Zone. Because leaving the comfort zone and heading into the fear zone takes a strong and compelling reason that’ll make the effort worth it. And it’ll take even more personal commitment to stay in the fear zone until you get through it into learning and growth.

I’m also going to give you a super helpful exercise that’ll give you the perspective you need to get going. And with the first of the year rapidly approaching, it’s the perfect time to be thinking about this as you consider what new big things you might want to tackle for next year.

So, let’s dive in.

I want to stay by talking about four helpful perspectives when it comes to preparing to leave the comfort zone.

1. The first is that **you must want that new thing badly**. Like a new job or more money or a big promotion or to reach your goal weight. Whatever it is for you. That new thing needs to be ‘worth it’ to you. It needs to matter enough that you’ll voluntarily leave comfortable to face your fears. If you’re not really committed to having thew new thing – if it’s not a compelling enough reason or a big enough payoff for you, you probably won’t stay with it. So, you need a powerful why for inspiration. You want that new thing to be important enough to you that you won’t quit just because it’s hard.
2. The second thing to know about leaving the comfort zone is that **growth and fear go hand in hand**. You can’t grow without experiencing fear. So, you need to accept that there will be some fear and uncertainty and self-doubt to experience. And when you experience it, just remind yourself it’s part of the process. It’s not a sign that the new thing isn’t meant for you. But the key is to prepare yourself for what you’ll encounter in the fear zone and that leads us to #3.
3. The third thing to know is that **we all have our own version of fear (in the fear zone).** And it’s important to get clear about what’s driving that fear for you. What it will feel like. What you will need to work through as you pursue that new thing.

For example, are you afraid of failure? If so, what are you making that failure mean?

Or are you afraid of the growth itself? Sometimes, many times I think, we can really WANT something new, but at the same time, we can fear it too. So, a lot of times, we run towards the new thing but then we’ll also do things that self-sabotage or make it impossible or hard to follow-through because deep inside, we really fear how having that new thing will change us or our relationships or whatever. Losing weight is a great example of this. So is getting the big promotion. It all sounds great until you start to consider exactly how it will change your life.

Or maybe you’re afraid of being judged by others.

What does the fear zone look like for you when you think of your new goal? And keep in mind that your fear zone might look different depending on your goal. So, as you think about this, make sure you explore your fear zone relative to each specific goal you have. Because most times, it’ll vary.

1. The fourth thing is **to reframe what failure and discomfort mean**. Most of us dread feeling uncomfortable. And we hate to think about failing or not acing something on the first try. But how you think about failure and discomfort is a choice. You get to decide. For example, what if you decided that the only way you can fail is to stop? And what if you decided that not mastering the thing on the first try is to be expected? And even more, what if you decided that the process of learning is iterative and that it’s a cycle of testing and learning to find out what works? That’s pretty different than just declaring yourself a failure if you don’t get it right on the first try. Bottom line, make sure you have proper expectations of what it’ll be like in the fear zone and even the learning zone. You’ll get things wrong. You’ll struggle. You’ll feel uncomfortable. You might even want to quit. A lot. That’s okay. And it’s to be expected. Just because it might be taking awhile to learn doesn’t mean it’s not meant for you or that you can’t do it.
2. The fifth thing is to **build a new perspective – your OWN perspective – on the fear zone** because that is going to be the key to staying with it. So here, it’s important to get clear on the fact that the fear zone is relatively small in the scheme of things. Again, if you haven’t already, go over to my Instagram and look at the four zones of growth graphic. It’s super helpful visual perspective and it shows that the fear zone is the smallest. It’s a helpful reminder because the intensity of the emotions we experience in the fear zone are so powerful and all-consuming and so crappy that it’s easy to assume we’re just going to feel that bad forever. But if you can keep the perspective and realize that the uncertainty and self-doubt won’t be around forever, that it’s just a phase, it can give you the grit and determination to stay with it instead of quitting.
3. The sixth thing is **to give yourself permission to have a non-linear journey**. Most of us want to believe that we can just decide to do something new and that we’ll quickly master it and experience all the amazing things we get to experience in the growth zone. But here’s the truth. Depending on how big your goal is, it might need to be a non-linear journey for you meaning, maybe you need to give yourself permission to “progress and retreat”. This is because sometimes, the fear zone – no matter how effectively we prepare for it or understand it or whatever – it can just be too much. There comes a point when the anxiety might have diminishing returns. You might want to give yourself permission to pause for a bit. To fall back to the comfort zone. Not to escape, but to reflect. To look at your progress and your struggles. To harvest the lessons. To recharge. And to prepare for your next attempt.

So, to recap here are the six things to know about preparing to leave the comfort zone.

1. You must want the new thing badly. You must have a compelling why.
2. Understand that growth and fear go hand in hand. You can’t have one without the other.
3. We all have our own version of fear and its usually goal-dependent, so take the time to get clear on yours.
4. Reframe what failure and discomfort mean to you. They don’t have to mean something bad.
5. Build a new perspective one the fear zone so it doesn’t seem all consuming.
6. Give yourself permission to have a non-linear journey, to progress and retreat and progress again.

As I said in the last episode, this construct of the four zones of growth is super helpful. If you haven’t checked out the infographic, so look at my Instagram @thepurposefulcareer. When I saw this visual it gave me a lot of clarity. It made the whole process of tackling big new things seem less scary. It gives you a path and a way to frame the process from comfort zone to growth so that we can make sense of it. And that means that the unknown feels a little less overwhelming and scary.

So, I want to leave you with a few final thoughts about leaving the comfort zone. While the construct of the four zones and the six perspectives on preparing to leave the comfort zone are super helpful, it’s going to take something else. It’s going to take self-belief.

And for this, I think it’s helpful to go back in your own life and find an example of where you’ve done something similarly difficult in the past. I call this “Past Self Proof.” It’s a concept I use with my coaching clients where they look for an example of something similar or of similar difficulty that they’ve tried and mastered.

This can serve as powerful proof that can help calm your fears. Because you channel this “I’ve done it before” inspiration that can help you channel the resilience and grit to keep going through the hard times. Because you know you’ve mastered hard things before.

If you want a worksheet to walk yourself through a specific goal for 2022 using the four zones of growth construct and the insights I’ve shared on the past two episodes, be sure to sign up for the goal-setting workshop we’ve got planned in early January. This is a free workshop and we’ll be working on setting goals and staying with them, using these four zones of growth. If you haven’t registered for that yet, do that now at thepurposefulcareer.com/goalgetter.

I believe 2022 can be a breakthrough year for your career. This is an unprecedented time of opportunity. Make this next year be the year you finally go for it. Because when you do, you’ll find out that it’s about far more than achieving that goal. It’s about the new person you become because you went after.

Until next time, make it a great week my friends.