

# BREAK FREE

## 5 STEPS TO BREAKING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

A blueprint for grabbing better opportunities  
and enjoying life every day.



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## Reflect on these three areas before learning why and how to break free from your comfort zone...

Why do you think you have trouble breaking out of your comfort zone? What are your possible consequences if you stay stuck?

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When was the last time you felt like you pushed your limits? How did it feel? How could it have been better for you?

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Is there something particular that you are considering in the near future that is outside your comfort zone?

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## Our comfort zone is no longer safe.

Comfort zone and safety zone used to be interchangeable terms, or it was thought that our comfort zone was contained within our safety zone. Things that we do repetitively become comfortable to us. They feel safe because historically we've been fine doing them.

Maybe we go into work, do our 8 hours, collect a paycheck, and do it again. Or we're expecting to have a similar family life as we had growing up, assuming that if it worked for our parents, it will work for us. Or we think we're going to retire at 65 and everything will magically be fine.

But this comfort is a false sense of security. We're now living in a world where we have global influence, artificial intelligence, less privacy, and robots that will replace jobs and disrupt industries. Because of technology, the world is quickly shifting, and we need to shift too.

We need to be more than just competent, and do more than just follow the current norm. It's like getting caught out by bad weather when flying on autopilot; we're hitting some bad weather and we need to consciously take control to avoid disaster. We need to have meaningful vision, create something new, and offer unique value.

If we've been stuck within our comfort zone, it's likely we've developed mental boundaries and limitations about what we can do, so stepping outside of that will make us feel vulnerable.

As long as we find, and stay within our new safety zone, avoiding things that will actually physically, emotionally, and spiritually harm us, we'll be fine. When we can contribute to ourselves, our loved ones, and the world in our own personal and creative way, we'll be adding unique value and we'll find safety again.

**Take action:** Create something, anything, and share it. Here are a few ideas: If you love to write, start a blog. Love cooking? Try catering a friend's event. Have a good voice? Sing in public. The point is to create something new, or put your spin on something existing, and put it out into the world. Remember, you're not contributing to others until you share it.

Inspired by Seth Godin's book, *The Icarus Deception: How High Will You Fly?*

Notes



## Pre-empt the brain vs. mind battle.

When we are young, we learn fast. There's new experiences all around us, constantly: gaining independence, starting our careers, partnering with someone, having children, etc., These happenings keep our brains moving and our minds active.

But, somewhere along the way, we tend to settle into comfortable, repetitive, predictable lives. Our mind goes into auto-pilot mode and we get stuck in our comfort zone.

Our brains and biology enjoy this mode. They like the easy route, recognize patterns, feel secure and get lazy. Our cells even crave the chemical balance that has become the norm.

However, our mind wants more out of life. Our mind wants to continuously evolve, progress and learn new things. Our mind wants the excitement that comes with novel experiences and this emotion causes conflict with our conservative brain.

To avoid suddenly hitting this crisis, we can pre-empt it, by getting out of our comfort zone early and giving our mind new ways to grow. By doing it early, we can take advantage of making our decisions before our heads are anxious and irrationally clouded.

Anytime we find ourselves boxed in by our own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, we should shake things up before it becomes overwhelming. That way we have a better chance of making wise decisions that benefit who we want to become, without the stress of urgency that can sneak up on us if we wait.

**Take action:** Our beliefs influence our thoughts, which become actions, and if repetitive, become our state of being. So if you're shaking things up, you can flip the equation around and first consider who you want to become, such as a good parent, for example. Next, what actions you'll need to be that person. Perhaps it's coaching your child's soccer practice. Then what thoughts and beliefs will be required to put the task in motion, such as "I can figure out how to coach kids' soccer."

Inspired by Joe Dispenza, DC's book, *Evolve Your Brain*

Notes



## How to rewrite our self-sabotaging stories.

"I can't..., I could never..., I always..., I suck at..." are words that are pretty common and start the sentences that become our limiting beliefs. We have these thoughts, then say these words, and end up avoiding experiences that could enhance our lives. These excuses enable us to stay in our safe cocoons where we feel comfortable.

Even though we may want more in life, we avoid vulnerability by internalizing personal characteristics that we've either made up, or that have been told to us. And worse, we sometimes don't realize that we are holding ourselves back. We're our own worst enemy. In fact, we may even enjoy the attention that comes with receiving sympathy, or playing the victim.

For example, have you heard a single friend say "All the good men/women are taken," and given them sympathy? Or have you said it yourself? Or how about, "I can't quit my job, I have a family to support." Heard this one: "You're so lucky you're good public speaking. Wish I was"? If not one of those, we're likely guilty of claiming other falsehoods that protect us from self awareness.

But here's some inspiration: singer Ray Charles grew up broke, blind and a minority, yet gained great success regardless. He didn't limit himself with sabotaging stories, and we can let go of our own limiting beliefs too.

Pay attention to your false stories, rethink them, and find opportunities to develop in that area. If you've grown up with these stories, then it won't be easy. Start by eliminating the phrases at the start of this tip and replacing them with "I can figure it out," "I'll learn to be better at..." or use the word "yet," implying future growth, such as, "I'm not good at this skill, yet."

**Take action:** Self awareness can be difficult, but definitely achievable. Here are some questions to help: What is a skill you're not good at yet? Do you have a phobia? What success have you not achieved yet? Do you think you're too old/young for something? Now figure out why, what stories do you tell yourself that limits you. Rewrite those stories to a belief that you can achieve greatness, and find opportunities to practice.

Inspired by Jen Sincero's book, *You are a Badass: How to Stop Doubting your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life*.

Notes



## Control our thoughts by designing what we think.

We're the only one who can truly control our thoughts so it makes sense to put some planning into how we want to think.

Want to think more positively? Or maybe be more present in the moment? Or how about a stronger appreciation for what we have? It's important to first know what we want our thoughts to be and why. Then we'll have a goal to focus on, and motivation to keep us going.

For example, if we want to be more adventurous, then we could plan to think "I'll try that," the next time something new comes up.

Next, make a plan for how we'll achieve this goal. For some, meditation will work. For others it will be a matter of consciously checking in with our thoughts at scheduled times of the day, such as breakfast, lunch and dinner, and then evaluating before bedtime. Or perhaps, a small reward for when we find ourselves thinking in line with our plan.

We may need someone close to us to help monitor our actions, body language, expressions, and words. Those things are telling signs of what's happening in our mind.

Who we are, stems from our thoughts – our thoughts lead to actions, which can form habits, and evolve into who we become – so it's more than worthwhile to put some effort into designing what we think.

**Take action:** At various times through today, note what kind of personal thoughts you have, write them down and before you go to sleep, review what thoughts you like, and those you want to change. Then figure out what you want to change them to, and why. Remember to align your thought design with who you want to become.

Inspired by Carrie Green's TEDx Talk: *Programming Your Mind for Success*.

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## Use momentum to build resilience.

We all have mental battles to fight on our way through life's journey. If we know how we can win these battles physically, it can actually be a detriment, in that it can lead us to avoiding the mental training process.

Going through the tough stuff makes us stronger because it builds our "fight-through" mindset. It teaches our brains which neurons to fire so that we will be prepared later, when we really need the strength. This discipline builds momentum every time we use it, making the next battle easier.

Conversely, if we skip out, momentum works against us. Here's an example many of us can relate to: a diet. We start it, and see some success, so know how we can physically keep going. But instead, we let that success trick us into thinking it's ok to have just one, small cookie.

Then we find the next time we're faced with that cookie, it's even harder to resist. It's because we didn't teach our brains how to enter that "fight-through" headspace in that area. Instead, we taught it to prepare our body to receive that cookie.

Habits are built on this same concept. The more often we train our brain to fire the neurons we want, the easier it becomes to stick with something new. And the longer we've spent with mental triggers we're trying to change, the harder it will be to redirect the neural activity. So start small and retrain your brain as soon as possible.

**Take action:** Just recognizing when you are in that "fight-through" phase can flip a switch so your brain goes into battle mode. Catch yourself when you say things like, "I'll skip this today because I already..." or "I'll do extra of that tomorrow since..."

Inspired by Jason Selk, Tom Barton and Matthew Rudy's book, *Organize Tomorrow Today: 8 Ways to Retrain Your Mind to Optimize Performance at Work and in Life*.

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## How do you tackle change?

On a scale of 1 to 10, do you resist change (1), or seek it out (10)?

Some people really struggle with change and take time to analyze a situation, to the point of stalling the inevitable, before getting on board. They waste their effort in worry when they could be spending that time shaping the change to their benefit.

Others relish newness and can't wait to jump in – they may even want to shake things up just for fun. They get excited about exploring new possibilities, but often forget how it affects the people around them.

Yet, successful change happens when everyone is aligned. If we're the type to resist change, we should keep in mind that we are pushing against the inevitable; evolution will always happen and we can't stop it. It's better to spend our time analyzing the problem/solution to make sure the change is for the better and know how we can work with it to our benefit. Go with the flow and put our effort into making sure it's flowing in a good direction.

If we're in a situation where we need to implement change, we should keep in mind that the hardest part of it, is not the mechanics, it's figuring out how to make the change ideal for all involved, and then leading others to embrace it. The more people affected, the more alignment and coaching will be required.

Whether it's a change in work processes, where we live, or our lifestyle, we need to make sure we include enough time and communication for others, in our implementation plans. Only when everyone affected by the change joins forces, and the transformation favors all, will the change truly be effective.

**Take action:** If you generally resist change, try doing something different today, for the sake of getting more comfortable with it. For instance, just a switch in your morning routine. If you love change, try coaching someone resistant to try something new. Remember, the key is to align interests.

Inspired by Thomas Reibke's Creative Mornings talk, *Shut Up and Listen*.





## Minimize risk by trying experiments.

Experiments are small, fun, about discovery and great for expanding our thinking. They are not about success or failure, so they don't carry the weight and expectation that often comes with starting something big.

If we tell someone we are experimenting with a new side business, they are more likely to be curious about what we are learning, or what we hope to get out of it, rather than if we'll make millions. Although failure is becoming more acceptable in our society, it still carries negative connotations, and fear of it can block us from trying new things.

When using the term experiment, we're not expected to have all the answers before we start. We're only expected to learn along the way, resulting in very little pressure. Experiments can be small enough to last only a few hours, such as being a guest in a new book club. Or larger to take a few months, such as doing a freelance consulting job on the side of our regular work.

Depending on what we discover, we could then choose to build on the knowledge we learned from the experiment, and make it part of our daily lives, or not. If we choose to continue, we'll have the hands-on experience on which to base the next steps. Our success rate on new initiatives will increase if we minimize risk with a couple experiments first.

Our world is changing fast, so we need to give things a shake, to keep up and discover new possibilities for ourselves.

**Take action:** Ask yourself "What would happen if I tried..." and fill in the blank with 10 different ideas that you find by looking around, watching other people, or recalling actions you've always been drawn to. Picture the possibilities and narrow down your list to a few that you think you'll enjoy and are feasible. Then start experimenting for the sole purpose of discovery.

Inspired by Sam Walton and John Huey's book, *Sam Walton, Made in America*.

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## When to quit and when to go the distance.

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“Winners never quit” is a lie. Winners are very strategic at what they quit, and deciding what not to even start. We can’t follow through on everything we begin, that would restrict us from going all out on what’s truly worthwhile.

We should quit pursuits that lead to a dead end. If there’s no light at the end of the tunnel, then we should get out fast, or we’ll be missing more important opportunities.

For instance, if we have a job where we don’t love the daily grind and it’s not got a bright future, then we’re only headed towards mediocre. That doesn’t mean we need to quit the career, just that particular job, or at least change the parts that aren’t working for us.

Now, when to stick it out? Every challenge worth doing is going to bring us through tough times. It’s going to weed out the people that aren’t suited for it, remember if it were easy, everyone would do it.

It’s important to assess a challenge before starting, to see if we believe in the result well enough, and if we have enough resources and ability to get through the hard parts. New goals usually start off well, with lots of energy, but we should question if we are prepared to go through the second phase, and for how long, before we can start building momentum towards success.

Going back to that career example, a new job is exciting, then after about 3-6 months it may become more demanding, and stay that way for years, before there’s a possibility for a promotion to the position we really want. If that position is really important to us, if it’s the light at the end of our tunnel, then it’s worth sticking it out through the tough times.

**Take action:** Quit something. What are you doing that is going nowhere? Where are you spinning your wheels with no good outcome? Stop. Now, what do you really want, but are struggling with? Take the energy from the dead end thing that you quit, and put it into what’s worthwhile.

Inspired by Seth Godin’s book, *The Dip: A Little Book that Teaches You when to Quit and When to Stick*.



## Have faith in being able to figure it out. Whatever "it" is.

Think of a time when you wanted something so much your heart ached. I bet you figured out a way to make it happen. Teenagers are really good at finding a way to make things happen, so maybe we should think back to that time. Like, when we wanted to meet someone we were attracted to, or went out with friends even though we had no money, or found time to party when we had exams. We ignored excuses and figured out how to do it.

The skill is already in us, and we can still do it, if we honestly want something enough. It takes creativity, determination and discipline, and most of all, it takes faith that we will be able to figure out how to pull it off.

We start by being honest about what we truly want, not what we used to want and not what others want for us. Then think about who we might become if we do figure it out. Connect with this sense of being to find a deeper purpose, and use that as motivation. It will help bring courage when it gets tough.

Consider all the excuses we might encounter along the way. What could hold us back that we need to resolve? It's often lack of money, time, and skills. Then brainstorm many ways (at least 20) of how we can conquer those obstacles and make it happen. Don't edit ideas at this stage, no matter how far fetched they may seem.

Decide on a first step, and take it. Then next step will reveal itself as you go along. Put thoughts into action and start the ball rolling, trusting that when you hit a roadblock, you'll figure it out.

**Take action:** Start talking about your dreams and goals to people who can help you figure out how to make them possible. There are lots of people who will be naysayers. Use their words as motivation and a jumpstart on what you'll need to figure out down the road.

Inspired by Marie Forleo's Oprah Supersoul Session, *Everything is Figureoutable*.

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## Consider how your life can grow now that you can break free from your comfort zone...

What small steps have you taken, or will you take today, to start building the discipline needed for mental toughness?

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Which key points from this course resonate with you most. How will you keep them top of mind and what action will you take?

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Think of something particular that is outside your comfort zone. How will you achieve the 5 steps?

1. Design your thoughts: 

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2. Build resilience: 

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3. Manage change: 

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4. Minimize risk: 

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5. Take the leap: 

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**Congratulations and all the best to you!**

