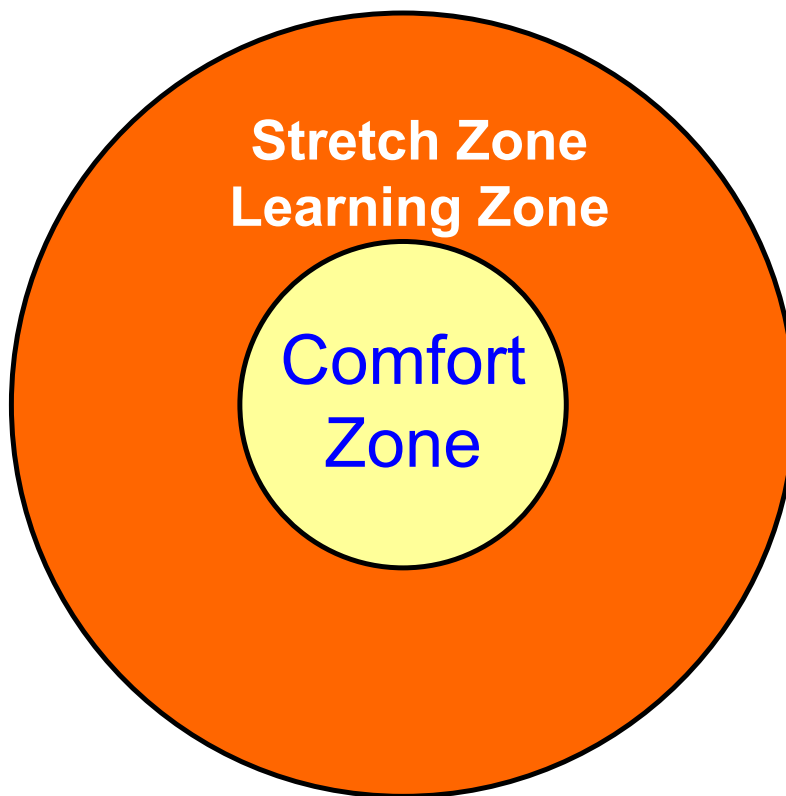


## **Step Outside Your Comfort Zone and Feel Invigorated!**

**By Dr Angus McLeod – Champion, Personal Growth**

Our comfort zone is how we live life automatically. We follow patterns. We successfully get up with our underwear inside our clothing. We brush our teeth without thinking about how to do it. The comfort zone is just that, comfortable. But that can be boring too! The danger about the desire to stay in the comfort zone is that our patterns become more entrenched; not only do we brush our teeth the same way but we start placing the soap in one specific direction. Or we wonder what we did today that was interesting, and truly, it was not! It is good to get outside the zzzzone and play!



When we leave the comfort zone we go into the stretch zone (please see figure). Suddenly we feel a little uncomfortable, we have to start thinking and often we start thinking because our feelings have already unsettled us. And the way the brain is constructed gives us clues why that is. We have three distinct brains. The first is the brain stem (reptilian brain) which keeps us breathing when asleep and maintains basic life. The second brain (mid-brain) contains the limbic system and this is concerned with emotional responses to stimuli. This is the instinctive motor of the brain where the mind processes and you then think, 'mmmm that's nice' or 'oh bugger, run!'. Lastly, comes the third brain (cerebrum or neocortex). This is the microprocessor part of the brain where the mind processes, compares and invents. It may be a surprise to know that the emotional mid-brain works 8,000 times faster than

the cerebrum. And that explains why people get into a mood or 'go into one'. High emotion, like car rage, can hijack logical thought and make a monkey out of you!

So how can we stop our mid-brain (feelings and fears) from hijacking our desire to change? We do that by being aware of the way the mind works and self-challenging ourselves. "Okay so I am scared, so what! I'll do it anyway!"

All this is easier when we have a coach to 'be on our case' and do this challenging for us. But most of us, most of the time, can do some of this ourselves. But why would we bother? What is wrong with the comfort zone after all?

The answer to that is the dinosaur. When we live life crowded with patterns of learned behaviour we stop truly experiencing the joy of living; we are on auto-pilot. But life happens around us; we go to buy the same toothpaste we have used for twenty years and find it has been rebranded. Or it's 2020 and toothpaste has gone and everyone is using jet-wash on their teeth! Now you are a dinosaur. And life happens to you. Your partner wants to quit work and study, or they want to emigrate and all your patterns are threatened. Then it's too late to think about new ways of thinking – you have to whether you like it or not!

So the stretch zone is a way of rethinking our patterns, challenging ourselves, taking risks with our thinking and actions and feeling more alive than we do now – yes, it is invigorating! And when life happens, we are more ready to deal with it.

The stretch zone is also called the 'learning zone' and that is just what the stretch does. We learn. Sometimes we re-learn too. And because we take ownership of our risk to stretch (our thinking and our actions), we get successful and we get pleasure from our growing self-confidence and self-esteem. And those are not to be sniffed at. Start now. Make a stretch in your thinking and action – be invigorated!

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