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Is It Time to Make Yourself Uncomfortable?

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After 15 years in the same house, I recently packed up and moved.

I'm no stranger to change. And while I know intellectually this change will be good, the bottom line is that this change made me uncomfortable, more than I've been in a long time.

And it's exactly what I needed.

WHY MAKE YOURSELF UNCOMFORTABLE?

When I started looking at making such a major change, one question kept playing over and over in my head:

WHY?

As in:

- *Why would you put yourself through this?*
- *Why spend your time, money, energy, resources, sanity?*
- *Why isn't what you have now enough?*
- *Why do you think making a change will be any better than what you have now?*

If you've ever faced any uncertainty in your work and life, I bet you've asked yourself the same questions.

As I took a hard look at my own "whys," I realized there were three answers that come up any and every time I decide to make myself uncomfortable. Here they are:

1. Because the reward is worth the pain.

Most of the time, we only change when we're forced to. We're practiced at sticking to the known and safe, and our brains are built to keep it that way.

But as the old saying goes, "a ship in the harbor is safe, but that's not what ships are for."¹ To get different results, we need to give up some safety.

For me, I wanted to be closer to my family at this stage of my life and theirs. I wanted to live in a beautiful area of the country instead of somewhere that had been chosen for me due to work many years ago.

I've worked hard to envision the end state—a rewarding picture—and not get caught up in the day-to-day pain of the change.

What's the reward that's worth changing to you?

Create a clear picture of it and you'll ease the path to change.

2. Because the process forces you to grow.

Have you ever thought about what happens to a seed, on its way toward being a flower?

First, it has to crack open its shell, which might be hard and dry so as to protect it between growing seasons. It has to push up through the ground, stretch its roots out to search for water, and fight off storms, squirrels, bugs, and any other thing in its environment that might like to nibble at its success.

That can't be comfortable.

But the persistent seeds, the well-tended ones, survive and thrive. The process of being uncomfortable is just the natural one they must go through to grow. Discomfort is where the growth happens.

And it's the same way with us. Any major transition makes you think differently, try new things, and learn lots. There's a reason we refer to growth and innovation as "breaking new ground."

3. Because courage needs practice.

A while ago, I asked my blog readers about what was happening in their lives at work. I wanted to know what was working, and what wasn't.

One idea surprised me: They longed for courage around their career and life decisions—courage to make bold choices; courage to speak up; courage to create their own footprints rather than walking in others'.

Like any muscle, courage takes practice. Repetition. Stretching. And so making a big decision like I did when I decided to move is definitely target practice for courage enhancement.

Why might it be time for you to make yourself uncomfortable today? No matter how it turns out, you'll be sure to learn, grow, and become more confident about your courage to change in the future. ■

ENDNOTE

¹ First credited to John A. Shedd, from his 1928 volume, *Salt from My Attic*.



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