

Uncomfortable Equals Growth

by John Leonard

"Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable" is a phrase I like to use to describe the process that we think of as growth. It describes what has to happen in order for athletes, coaches, people in all areas of life, to improve on whatever they wish to improve.

When we are within our "comfort level" we are confident, happy, and feel relaxed and without anxiety.

Why are we comfortable? Because we know we can handle any challenge that is put to us without much strain, effort or "dis-comfort". We may be totally and completely comfortable sitting at home watching TV or hanging with our friends. But if we are asked to go outside for a 5 mile run the rain, unless we are prepared for it, we are "un-comfortable".

Why? Because we are unsure (anxious) about the result. Will we "poop out" and be unable to finish? Will we be wet, cold, looking pretty awful and have people driving by in cars making fun of us? We react to the unknown by usually visualizing the worst possible scenarios we can imagine with our fertile imaginations.

But the completion of that five mile run the in rain leaves us feeling...what? Perhaps a bit cold, perhaps a bit wet, perhaps with some temporary fatigue, but it also leaves us with a sense of accomplishment, a much stronger self-respect for conquering elements and "handling it", and physically stronger and more capable. Also, about an hour or two later, we'll have more energy than we had before the run. In other words, we're stronger.

In fact, there is no strengthening without testing ourselves and pushing ourselves. This is true not just in physical life, but in intellectual and spiritual life as well. We must learn to move beyond our "comfort zone" to our "un-comfort zone" ...in other words, be uncomfortable.

So what does "become comfortable with being uncomfortable" mean? It means that in order to progress or grow, we must challenge ourselves, and accept that discomfort is a stage of growth, and it will lessen with time, and increased competence. Nothing we do is more intimidating than the scenes we imagine about new efforts. The reality is always less awful than the anticipation, and the worst of it is just before we "start". Once underway, the discomfort will lessen appreciably.

If we can focus on being in the "here and now" and keep our mind and body focused on the task at hand, we'll quickly overcome all obstacles in front of us, and become capable, thus creating a new comfort zone for ourselves.

Then, its time to repeat the process, after a decent interval to appreciate the fruits of our effort.

"Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable".