SEEK DISCOMFORT

When was the last time you truly felt alive? Was it at home watching TV after three hours, going to work like you do every day, or going to the same bar you go to every weekend? Or was it when you stepped out of your comfort zone and took a risk? When you walked up to a stranger and started a conversation, and suddenly became friends? Was it going on a spontaneous trip, without any idea what might happen? Or taking on a seemingly impossible challenge and then ended up overcoming it?

The human kind, homo sapiens, has survived around 200 000-300 000 years on this earth. One of the main reasons why that has been possible is fear. Fear is an instinct helping us make fast decisions based on minimum risk. In nowadays society, we don’t need fear to survive our everyday life. The problem is that, since fear is an instinct, it is almost impossible to ignore and therefor we still naturally make decisions based on fear every single day. What if we actively stopped doing that?

Why do we fear? We fear to survive. The instinct of survival is the base of most fears. Looking at different fear types this becomes obvious. What kinds of fear exist? The most known fear is the fear of animals or events that may hurt our body physically, such as wild, uncontrolled fire, lions and other carnivore animals or heights we would die falling from. Some other fears like the fear of flying, the fear of spiders that may be venomous or poisonous have their origin in such. These fears are more or less reasonable fears because the only way is avoiding these dangerous situations.

Fear becomes problematic in situations with no or close to no danger. Tasting new types of food, trying to skate for the first time, getting on an airplane, are examples of situations of this kind. The act of confronting fears of this kind will trigger an ingrown feeling connected with survival similar to the one our ancestors have felt overcoming dangerous events in the past. On the other side of fear is absolute bliss, an instinctive awarding feeling after surviving an event with an unpredictable outcome. In other words, this is the feeling of being alive.

Another type of fear is the fear of exclusion from society, taking us the chance of being part of a community or even reproducing, most times going hand in hand with a psychological pain or discomfort. A human being has a far smaller chance of surviving in nature when he/she is on their own, explaining the necessity of society and why it is important to live together. Researchers found out that people, living outside society, excluded on their own often have a far less healthy state of mind, get sick and may even become crazy or die from loneliness. Despite the need of others, we tend to fear situations of getting to know each other. This social fear comes from the lack of self-esteem, the questioning character of humankind, questioning even itself.

Talking to strangers by going to events like classes that seem interesting, seem difficult to a lot of people, as boarding people you find attractive or interesting in the street or the subway. The personal barrier of discomfort exists because of the lack of experience and knowledge that often nothing negative and simultaneously formative will happen and a positive highly rewarding opportunity is neglected. Overcoming the own fear by trying it out step by step can help to change the views of the individual. Through the countless numbers of persons on this planet, failure needs to be seen as insignificant, showing the individual that disinterest is not of importance, but a common ground may evolve into something crucial.

The fear of exclusion through being different can be overcome by realizing that there is a lot of different tastes or that the own view of things is more intense than the view from the exterior. Small steps can be taken, from wearing interesting socks or even bigger ones, like having a stupid or even funny helmet on. The essence is to see that people want to find common ground, because they too want to part of your society, leading to a common laugh about the absurdity of the difference per example.

The social fear of not being accepted by having a different opinion is another example of bad self-esteem. One method to improve and test yourself or the boundaries of the acceptance looked for can be not lying for a period of time, not to yourself, not to others and to always tell the truth without deflecting it. Another is to learn more about communication, not to be afraid that the opinion is not mispronounced and the opposite gets it the right way. A sensibilization for how do people hear what is said can be reached by leaving the comfort zone of talking only the necessary, but question how the opposite understood what was said and to clarify it after it was misunderstood.

Seeking discomfort is mainly an attitude for making use of more of the opportunities presented in everyday life. By making a habit of making a lot of decisions just slightly out of the comfort zone the long-term results can be incredible. If every single decision is made towards what is truly right even if it means a small step out of the comfort zone the overall result will add up to a complete change of life quality. In addition to changing habits with more discomfort in everyday life, it can also be a good idea to actively search for intense discomfort at times as well. Going skydiving, starting a dance battle with a stranger on the street or spending a day in a random city could be examples of such events. More than just the thrill of the experience itself, events like these can help to get a kick start towards seeking discomfort more in everyday life.

What opportunities may occur through the step out of the comfort zone? What if we start saying yes to the things our gut tells us to do?

Internal effects are noticeable. We would find ourselves in new situations allowing us to grow mentally more and faster than what would ever be possible otherwise. The experience and knowledge added to the repertoire gives a deeper self-understanding by showing what we can reach by overcoming small barriers holding us back. Higher self-esteem leads to a more positive way of thinking and with this a far happier daily life. This would have an impact on how people in our society see us. A more self-confident person is easier becoming a friend, seems to be more attractive and seems more qualified, such as in communications and thereby has a bigger understanding of a lot of fields.

Also, a lot of external effects would occur in the life of individuals coming out of their comfort zone. We would give ourselves many more opportunities to find new passions, friends, new jobs or impressions of things; we never had before. Who knows? Maybe acting is your biggest passion, fulfilling your biggest desires. Maybe the girl sitting next to you on the bus will become your best friend. Maybe the person smiling at you across the street turns out to be the love of your life.

How can the effects be measured? There are different ways of measurement, but the easiest one is the accumulated subjective experience one has made. A qualitative research basis is possible, asking different test persons about their feelings and events in their daily lives over a continuous period. As known, first experiences seem to have the most impact on people, giving us the opportunity to see the tendency of the effects of coming out of the own comfort zone, even after a smaller amount of collected experiences.

Another is the qualitative method. For this one, a big amount of people of all different ages, races, genders need to be asked about their self-evaluations and evaluations of these experiences. The comparison between people who had more gone out of their comfort zone and people who didn't can show that a higher average of happiness and self-esteem as perceived opportunities leading to self-fulfillment is found in the first group.

In review, getting out of the comfort zone and standing up for ourselves in front of our fears which inhibit denial of the true potential of mental resources, as well as opening up to opportunities we might not even have thought of, can bring us a greater optimism and a larger self-confidence. This review indicates that overcoming our fear can help to improve mental health and can create a higher life quality over a long period. This paper encourages the acceptance of ourselves as a less fearful being and supports an innovative lifestyle adapted to our modern social life, showing the accessibility and affordability and cultural compatibility to it.

We regret the things we don’t do, not the things we do. So start seeking discomfort.

Sources:

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