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## Leadership Development and Change Management: Expansion of the comfort zone

**In his article >Motivorientierte Erweiterung der Komfortzone< (“Motivating Expansion of the Comfort Zone”) Ilja Rep describes that it is crucial in successfully handling change and personal development to do things differently, to dare do to something new and to leave familiar paths. Learning only takes place outside one’s own comfort zone and means recognizing new abilities as well as using them.**

Only there, personality development takes place. The self-confidence gained by that in turn enables to take further steps out of the comfort zone which is growing by learning. With this process, a personal flexibility that enables us to dare handling unknown challenges more quickly and with less effort is developing.

### **Getting out of the comfort zone**

Leaving the comfort zone means change. The basic requirement for the successful trip outside the comfort zone is believing that change makes sense and is possible. According to Carol Dweck, a psychologist at Stanford University, “people are able to change when they think it is generally possible. Who believes to be able to influence his or her personality and abilities is more open to new experiences and to risk more.”.

### **Two factors influence one’s own development success:**

- Believing in feasibility: the catalyst to trust in the first step.
- Frustration tolerance: keeping at it, even if there are opposing forces.

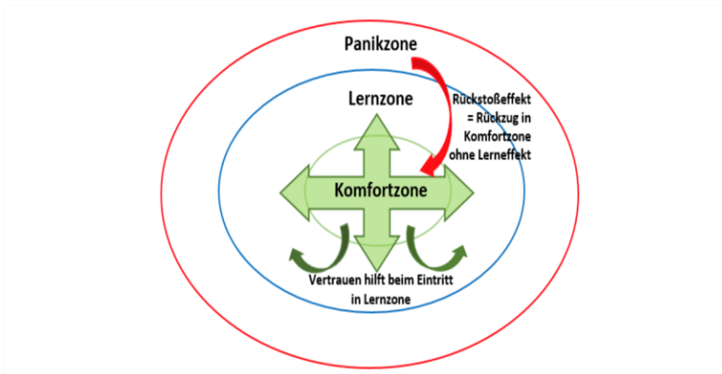
For which reasons it should be worth it to leave one’s own comfort zone? The unknown luck on the other side of the comfort zone is, if at all visible, only dimly visible.

Living inside the comfort zone is almost unbeatably comfortable: well-known territory on which we are safe from exhausting contemplation or unwanted surprises. Some people are really hoping that everything will be better someday, even without the risk of leaving their comfort zone. Of course, not having to think and acting by habit is comfortable, e.g. falling asleep next to the partner, going to the office one is used to, having meetings with a well-known agenda etc.

Furthermore, our brain wants to continually automatise things, establish habits. It even combines this with clear sensations of pleasure.

The Learning Zone Model according to Senniger (2000)

Leah Weizenegger 23.11.17 09:53  
**Kommentar:** Leider ist es mir nicht möglich, die Beschriftung in dem Diagramm hier zu bearbeiten, daher ist es noch die deutsche Beschriftung.



**There is stimulating stress in the learning zone**

Learning can be stressful und people have an individually different stress-resistance. So, how high is the reconcilable dose of adventure outside of old habits? Not only the point in time from which a person feels stressed but also whether the stress is perceived as positive and supportive or negative and irksome is an important factor.

According to Ilja Rep, with reaching a certain intensity of adventure, the trip outside the comfort zone is no longer perceived as pedagogically valuable but as psychological strain. The personal reconcilability limit is reached when a curious tension becomes fear.

In Tom Senninger’s Learning Zone Model, the zone where one feels “good” stimulating stress (eustress) is called “learning zone” (Senninger, 2000). There, one learns because one is challenged without being overchallenged. That is called “Stretch”.

Metaphorically speaking, the learner accomplishes emotional and cognitive stretching exercises in the learning zone. But when he or she gets further and further from known territory, it can happen that he or she enters the panic zone where he or she perceives “negative” stress (distress).

**Having fun while learning**

According to coach Ilja Rep, “people act sustainably in their own terms when they think what they feel”. He adds: “So, we accomplish a task because it is fun and because we can a set goal. If one moves within this intersection, no willpower is needed to accomplish the task and one might even reach a ‘flow’.”

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**The unknown becomes known, the known becomes trustworthy:  
traveling as a learning experience**

Like in driving into the world of a new traveling goal, many things seem to be unusual, new or bewildering and sometimes even scary. On the second trip, one recognizes first reference points that one already got to know on the first visit. This process of accostumization is called habituation. The unknown becomes known, the known becomes trustworthy. In the process, the comfort zone keeps growing continually.

Quelle:

>Motivorientiere Erweiterung der Komfortzone<, Ilja Rep  
>Abenteuer leiten – in Abenteuern lernen<, T. Senninger (2000), Ökotopia  
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messbacher  
Coaching und Organisationsberatung  
Schanzenstrasse 79 · 34130 Kassel  
+49 (0) 561 – 400 98 07  
+49 (0) 160 – 855 56 15  
[info@messbacher.de](mailto:info@messbacher.de)  
[www.messbacher.de](http://www.messbacher.de)