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# When a Comfort Zone Matters

## by Erick Rheam

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June 21, 2023

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### When a Comfort Zone Matters

By Erick Rheam - Professional Speaker & Author

Success lies outside of your comfort zone. The times I've elevated my life and my career are the times I reached outside of what made me comfortable and stretched my paradigm to achieve new levels of success. However, when is a comfort zone actually beneficial? I would contend that a comfort zone is your greatest ally when developing relationships.

Connecting with others is a critical component of success, because you cannot achieve anything meaningful without the help of others. The people you relate with and surround yourself with are critical when you consider your lifelong journey. How do you connect with others? I believe the answer lies within their comfort zone.

I teach and train on human dynamics. One of my specialty workshops involves nonverbal communication. I teach on how to discern if someone is out of their comfort zone, why? Because, if someone is out of their comfort zone, their body goes into survival mode and will seek for ways to regain its comfort.

How does a person respond when they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation? There are three primary responses. First, a person will freeze. This is a survival technique that's been ingrained in us since dinosaurs roamed the earth. Generally, when a person feels threatened and find themselves out of their comfort zone, they will freeze as they ponder their options for survival. In our daily interactions this manifests itself in many ways. That person becomes silent, distant, their body movement is reduced to minimal gestures.

The second response is flight. Most will flee an uncomfortable situation in order to avoid the awkwardness of it. How does one flee an uncomfortable situation? They will divert the conversation and provide excuses for why they must leave. A person checks his watch, or his eyes scan for the exit. He may pull away from the source of discomfort and leans towards the exit.

Finally, a person's last response to an uncomfortable stimulus is to fight. That person becomes combative, agitated, and argumentative. She fights, not because she doesn't like you, but because she's out of her comfort zone and feels cornered and has no other choice.

When you become adept at recognizing when someone is out of their comfort zone and are exhibiting one of the three survival response in freeze, flight, or fight, then you have an opportunity to strengthen your relationships by taking measures to ease the tension in the moment and allow the person you're connecting with back into their comfort zone, thus saving the relationship in that moment. How do you do that?

1. **Check yourself:** When you notice someone is uncomfortable, do an immediate self-check and make sure you're not the problem. How's your body language? Do you need to give the person some physical space? How's your tone? Are you aggressive? You might need to soften your tone and allow the person your interacting with room to relax.

2. **Change the environment:** Be situationally aware of your surroundings. Is the environment causing stress? Maybe it's too loud, too crowded. Is there someone else involved in the conversation that is affecting the mood? Sometimes, just moving the conversation to a different environment is enough to bring the person back to their comfort zone.

3. **Defer the conversation:** Focus on what you can control. Sometimes, a person is uncomfortable for reasons outside of your control. He may have engaged in an argument with his spouse five minutes before your interaction and he's still upset. He may be having a bad day or not feeling well. It's acceptable to defer the conversation to another time when the situation and mood is more conducive to a positive interaction. It's fine to simply say, "Is now not a good

time? Should we reschedule?" You are giving your friend, colleague, or family member grace in this moment and they will respect you for it.

You should challenge yourself to live outside of your comfort zone; however, you must connect with others in their comfort zone. Relationships matter and they are maintained and strengthened in comfort. Become more aware of a person's mood and effective at making others comfortable and you will be on your way to mastering human dynamics.

**About the Author:** [Erick Rheam](#) is a speaker and published author. He communicates and educates on topics related to discovering significance and the art of mastering human dynamics to achieve success.

Hear Erick speak at the [2023 AENC Annual Meeting](#) in Winston-Salem, NC on Monday, July 24<sup>th</sup>.

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