Life. It’s kind of a funny thing—so full of twists and turns, ups and downs. One minute you are loving life, the next you are bored, stressed out, ready for something new. Some days you enjoy the routine of life and other days you need change immediately, wanting and wishing your life to be different. Wishing you were different.

Every day we are given the opportunity for a new beginning. Every step is a potential new road open for exploration. Every yes is a chance for a new adventure. So what makes this all possible or sometimes feel impossible.

One small four-letter word, RISK.

**risk assessment**

Risk-taking is simply a matter of challenging yourself.

Everyone relates to risk differently. The thought of risk might make someone physically uncomfortable with
fear. Someone else may hear about a ‘risky situation’ and begin buzzing with excitement. Ironically, fear and excitement are the same emotion but with a different name. Think about it - racing heart, sweaty palms, difficulty swallowing - these things happen whether you’re about to get on a roller coaster or give a public speech.

It is fear that blocks action and excitement that creates momentum for action. The good news is that it is possible to transfer fear into excitement and reach beyond your potential. But before you can reach beyond your potential, you need to understand it.

**We learn what we are capable of in every moment of every day.** As life happens, situations change, or we are called upon, we learn about our potential. We see how we show up. We feel when we are being asked to step beyond our comfort zone. We know what is being asked of us. Things that we once thought impossible become possible in those moments. So how do you know when taking action is worth the risk?

Positive risk-taking

While not all risk is bad, it is important to recognize when the risk is worth it and when it is reckless. While you might be ready to push beyond your current limits, try something new and join the crowd, you do want to be smart about it. **Nothing is worth risking your safety and well-being.**

When you think you are ready to take a new risk, before you move into action, take some time to get clear on what you are actually risking. You may think you’re about to risk one thing, when you actually fear another. Often times you take the risk without understanding what you are risking.

Are you ready…

+ to discover the hidden strengths you possess?
+ to face the risk of embarrassment if you fail?

Always remember that failing is a part of learning and we all have different strengths that make us unique. When you get clear about why you are choosing a new behavior, you’ll better understand how you are about to grow.

**Taking risks can drive you to try new things.** Positive risk-taking can promote healthy development, independence and boosts self-confidence leading to innovative thinking. So don’t worry about what you will look like or how it will turn
out; if you try something new, you are bound to learn something new.

Some examples of positive risk taking are: trying a new sport, saying hello to someone new, raising your hand in class, taking a college course.

failing proudly

Anything worth having is going to involve some risk. Think about a person you consider successful. This person most likely encountered challenges and obstacles, but kept risking that failure in order to reach his or her goals. Successful people just keep moving forward no matter what.

Charlie Day, creator and star of the popular show *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, told college graduates at Merrimack College about the time he turned down a secure job with Fidelity Investments in order to pursue his dream of acting. While he encountered failure before making it big, he felt it was important to “do what makes you great. Do what’s uncomfortable and scary and hard but pays off in the long run. Be willing to fail. Let yourself fail. Fail in the way and place where you would be proud to fail. Fail and pick yourself up and fail again. You cannot succeed without the risk of failure. You cannot have a voice without the risk of criticism. You cannot love without the risk of loss.”

You might not remember but at some point you needed to learn how to walk. It probably took many tries and numerous falls. But you kept going and trying until you could do it and soon you would also start to run. What once felt impossible was not only met but exceeded.

Risk can be scary, but can also be liberating and rewarding.

the comfort zone

There is something to be said for comfort zones. They feel safe, secure, and well, comfortable. Sticking with what you know seems harmless. Remaining quiet can make you feel protected. Going along with the norm won’t disrupt the system. But by living a life in which you take no chances, you are actually running the risk of living a life of regrets. You get one life with many chances, so take one that feels good to you and ride it all the way to the end of your rainbow. Happiness can be found on the other side of risk.

“Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.”

Neale Donald Walsh

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risky business

Greatness often grows from obstacles, so why not put forth the effort to be great? Start something new: a YouTube channel, an Etsy shop, host Origami Owl Jewelry Bars all over town. When you try something new, knowing you put something on the line (like being comfortable), will make your payout of success that much sweeter. Risk does not just come into play when you decide to pursue your dreams. Smaller risks can come up on your journey at any time. It’s how you are able to meet these risks, no matter how big or small, and still manage to succeed.

Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group, values the idea of risk in any potentially rewarding venture, especially when it comes to being creative and solving problems. Trying something new may be risky, but it can set you apart from the crowd. Branson believes you need to step outside your comfort zone, confront risk and remember above all else that you are an entrepreneur.

Closing

Being a risk-taker can use more of your potential, make you stand out and teach you valuable lessons about creativity and innovation. If you have a dream you are truly passionate about, risking the loss of your comfort zone in order to push past that five percent of your potential is exciting and can bring you new levels of joy and accomplishment.

Reflection

1. After reviewing your assessment, how comfortable are you with your level of risk-taking? What would you change?

2. Who is one person whose success and achievements you admire? What risks do you think they may have taken to get where they are now?

3. Imagine the best version of your life 6 months from now. What does it look like?

4. What do you have to do in order to kick-start that life? What risks are involved in achieving that dream?

“Everybody has a creative potential and from the moment you can express this creative potential, you can start changing the world.”

Paulo Coelho, author of The Alchemist