

12 Ways to Break Out of Your Comfort Zone

With age, many of us get more hesitant about doing things outside our comfort zones. It can be all too easy to find reasons not to try something new. But new experiences are part of what makes life such a full and interesting adventure. By getting out there and trying new things you can speed up and sharpen your vision, hone your creative skills, build your perception muscles and release endorphins.

Here's 12 ways to break out of your comfort zone:

- 1. Go bird watching or crowd watching** – Whether you love nature or people watching them in their natural habitat be it bushland or a crowded railway station, spending time observing behaviour, mannerisms and interactions is a great way to speed up your visual processing skills and expand your “field of view” so you can take in more in each glance. The result – you’ll have fun while improving your eye for detail and be able to see more than ever before in every aspect of your life.
- 2. Travel to a new destination** - Travel can have a profound effect on us by taking us out of our comfort zones and opening our eyes to some of the different places and ways of life that were unknown to us. I am a big fan of travelling, particularly to overseas as it can open your eyes to fresh new perspectives. Travelling to other cultures helps you learn about and understand different cultures. You can learn about their belief systems, how they live and what they value. As you learn about other races, religions, political systems and lifestyles you may also notice your own misconceptions and work to overcome them. If you haven't got the funds for a jaunt to Paris, no matter. Even a weekend camping trip or a picnic in a park away from home can make you happier.
- 3. Spend time by the ocean** - There's nothing like sand between your toes and fresh sea air. Sit in front of a beautiful view. Find a spot close by with a nice view near your home and work that you can visit when you need a break. Fresh air is invigorating and alters the levels of serotonin in your brain— that's the stuff that makes you happy!
- 4. Vary the foods you eat** – instead of your typical meal tonight try something new. Cook with more garlic as it not only adds delicious flavour, it also keeps blood pressure down to keep you relaxed and healthy. Eat chocolate. Besides releasing endorphins and stimulating serotonin production in your brain, chocolate releases phenylethylamine, the chemical that causes feelings of love. Eat more spinach. Popeye's favorite green is packed with folic acid, an important vitamin that boosts serotonin production.
- 5. Try a new sport or physical activity** – There are many amazing benefits of physical activity. Getting out there and active can make you feel better about yourself, ward off anxiety and stress, improve your sleep, strengthen your heart, strengthen and build bones and increase your energy levels by releasing chemical endorphins in your body giving you a natural high. You know that euphoric feeling after a great workout – the “runners high” it will give you a more positive, energised outlook on life.
- 6. Smile at a stranger** – smiling is a great way to make yourself stand out while helping your body to function better. Smile to improve your health, your stress levels and your attractiveness. It takes fewer muscles to smile than it does to frown and the muscles you use to smile lift your face, giving you an instant, free facelift! So the next time you pass a stranger offer them a free facelift by smiling at them – smiling is contagious and when you welcome someone with a smile you can lift their face and their mood too.

7. **Make new friends** - Meeting other people is exciting and finding a new person with whom to connect can only enhance your fulfilment. As a social animal you need the companionship of others; friends and a support network are important for your mental and physical wellbeing. Researchers at Flinders University discovered that having friends helps you live longer and Harvard University researchers found that friends help keep your brain healthy as you learn new things.
8. **Send snail-mail** - Rediscover the pleasure of old-fashioned communication. Many people born after 1979 have sadly never handwritten a letter to anyone. So accustomed to email and texting, actually picking up a pen and writing a personal message to someone - not on a sticky note, but on actual stationery – has become out-dated. However, to actually sit down and put a part of you into a handwritten letter, to tell a story and express an emotion to someone important to you, provides a glimpse into who you are. Plus, a handwritten letter can become a cherished possession that the recipient can keep for years to come. Expressing thanks and gratitude in writing makes you and the recipient happy.
9. **Go to hear live music** – There is nothing richer than the experience of live music. Being on the spot with all of the energy, people are energized, bouncing around, dancing, feeling completely uninhibited and free from the cares of the world; generally having the time of their life. Something about hearing and seeing a band play the music sheds a whole new emotion and feelings on the experience. Feeling the beat in your chest and the vibration through the floor is a huge part of the fun and something that puts you in the moment in a way an iPod can't.
10. **Perform random acts of kindness** - performing random acts of kindness is a great way to shift out of your comfort zone and make you think differently by getting you to look for new opportunities to do good. Many people experience a helper's high a rush of euphoria, followed by a period of calm and well-being for hours or days. Helping can enhance feelings of joyfulness, emotional resilience, vigor and optimism and also can make you feel more connected to others which can strengthen the immune system. Start looking for ways to be kind, hold open a door for a stranger or leave some money in the vending machine, for no other reason than doing something nice for your fellow man.
11. **Change one thing in your daily routine.** I love routines because they are convenient. They help me conserve my energy for more important matters. But an overreliance on them can cause us to get stuck in a rut. To avoid this try changing one thing in your daily routine each week. It could be changing the type of books you read, visit a new coffee shop or try wearing a different colour. You'll stave off boredom, foster creativity and might discover something new that delights you.
12. **Play with a dog** - The studies showing the positive effects man's best friend can have on your psyche are numerous: better emotional and physical health and a wagging tail. Or if you are more of a cat person then watch www.kittehroulette.com . If watching nonstop videos of playful kittens doesn't lift your spirits, nothing will. Spending time with my dogs always get me out of a rut and changes my mood or state.



My stress
managers
"Mintie" left
and
"Miss Chops"
right.



