

Embrace the Unknown to Transform Your Life

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“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” – Eleanor Roosevelt

As we continue in the second year of the pandemic, many of us wonder how we made it these past two years and what life was even like before.

The funny thing about life is that you can plan every step, but it doesn't always work out as planned. The world we live in is constantly changing, and new things are always happening. As the clock ticks, we grow older and wiser. And the truth is we will never know what life may throw at us tomorrow, a year from today or even in the next few moments.

There's no doubt that education is a critical component to each person's success. But one thing I've realized is that our system does a terrible job of teaching us one crucial lesson: how to embrace the unknown. Society has wired us to be planners. From a young age, we should have an answer to the question, what do you want to be when you grow up? At 18, we should already have our career path planned out and the steps we'll take to accomplish our goals. Fortunately for some, and unfortunately for others, the choices you make at 18 can affect you for the rest of your life.

I don't know about you, but at 18, I had no idea what I wanted from life and what life was like in the real world. I chose whatever career path people talked about and then began planning for it. I had no idea what that path would look like

until after I graduated. Then I faced the harsh reality that many millennials face today of realizing that their career goals were not what they expected. But when you've already invested so much into something, the last thing anyone wants to do is jump ship.

This is a topic that society doesn't talk about enough. So the question I want to ask is, what do you do in a situation like this? Do you stick with it because of the time and resources you've invested and the people you've told and have supported you? Or do you leave and find something else that could potentially make you happy?

The last thing that education does is teach us to take risks and embrace uncertainty. Society has ingrained in our brains to play things safe and go with what we know. Because human nature shows that what we know provides the most comfort. But unfortunately, that's also why 40 million American adults are unhappy and have struggled with depression at least once.

We've heard stories about people taking risks and coming out in a much better place with more opportunities. I don't want to be one of those people you hear about. But I think it's important to tell this story now and at this moment as I continue to take risks, fail and succeed.

The first significant risk I took was in 2014 when I moved to the Middle East. From then, embracing change and the unknown has been a regular part of my life and has led to significant personal and professional development. Each moment I realized something wasn't right for me, I decided to let it go, not knowing what would be waiting on the other side. But, embracing the unknown has led me to greater heights personally and professionally. And I want to share the lessons I've learned about embracing change along the way.

It's normal to fear the unknown, and not having a plan is a terrifying thing indeed. But if the pandemic has taught a

common understanding, I feel that it's 1. we can't plan everything in life, and 2. life is short.

Here are six reasons why embracing the unknown will be the most significant thing you do for yourself:

1. Within the unknown, you will find yourself

We've all thought bout traveling to another country at least once in our lives – the idea of leaving behind the things that weigh you down and finding yourself. A different country brings adventure through new experiences and excitement. But what if I told you that you don't have to travel to another country to find that? How about leaving behind the things that aren't good for you here and discovering yourself in a new setting, whether in your career, relationship, personal life or wherever?

Of course, some people do want to travel. But if you find that your reason for leaving is to escape from your current reality, stepping out of your comfort zone in small ways can also help you find yourself.

By placing yourself in uncomfortable situations, you will find out what you're capable of accomplishing, what you like and dislike and what you'll tolerate. The best way to find out who you are is to say yes to new experiences, especially those that scare you or make you anxious. Placing yourself in these situations will provide the most growth.

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2. You'll become comfortable with

the best and worst things that life throws at you

Embracing the unknown will prepare you to tackle anything without being phased. The best part of putting yourself in uncomfortable situations is that you always come out of it a stronger person. As you go through unfamiliar and uncomfortable situations, the fear of the unknown becomes less scary. This teaches you perseverance and increases your confidence to handle any situation.

3. You'll not only realize that you have no control over what happens, but you will be okay with it

Uncertainty about your future, your relationship, your career – uncertainty in general – is discomfoting. The most revealing image of uncertainty and anxiety was at the onset of the pandemic as crowds were panic-buying at grocery stores in the angst of running out of toilet paper. Looking back, in the end, it wasn't even that bad.

Planning to an extent is smart, but there is value in also being okay with not knowing what will happen today, tomorrow or a month or year from now. Embracing uncertainty will make you realize very quickly that you really have no control over what happens. More importantly, you'll have control over your reactions and quickly learn to manage and control your emotions in any situation.

“If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.” – Daniel Goleman

4. It makes you more chill

When you become okay with not knowing what will happen, an overwhelming sense of chill and adaptableness comes upon you. You've been through the points of putting yourself in rough terrain and not knowing where your decisions will lead you. After identifying that you can figure yourself out in any situation, you become happier and more confident. With that experience, embracing the unknown is a great way to make you unphased by the challenges and changing conditions that life throws at you.

It'll just be another moment where you'll once again figure it out and move forward.

5. You'll become happier

How often have you said yes to something you didn't want to do or agreed with someone you disagreed with, just because you weren't sure what would happen? Perhaps you feared what they would think or how your actions or responses would affect your future opportunities.

Embracing the unknown makes you more inclined to do the things that are good for you and the things that will make you happy. You'll say no a lot more than you say yes. You won't care about disappointing others because you'll know that you can hold your own whether you disappoint them or not.

You'll become more sure of yourself and won't need to seek the approval of others. In return, these actions will make you more genuine and will attract the respect of others. You'll learn to set better boundaries and do what's best for you. With the assurance that whatever you decide will, in the end, benefit you because you know that opportunities are never-ending.

6. Opportunities will present themselves to you

We've all heard the phrase, when one opportunity closes, another opens. One of the biggest lessons I learned was when I decided to leave my full-time job to work on my own business. Although it took me a while to muster the courage to jump, I was not only more content, but a newer and better opportunity presented itself at that exact moment. When you decide to embrace fear and do what's best for you, you attract better opportunities and the universe will align to meet your expectations and desires.

"When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." – Paul Coehlo

Embracing the unknown can have a different face for each person. It can look like leaving a bad relationship, switching careers, changing majors, transferring to another school, saying no to your boss, declining a meeting or corporate event and the list goes on. Either one, another or all, the first step into embracing the unknown is to make the first move. Whether it be in declining that first meeting, researching a new career or another school, starting your business or leaving your job or relationship. We often fear the worst of what could happen to us but forget to envision the best that could happen.

"A lot of times people look at risk and ask, 'What are the odds that I will succeed?' A different way to look at risk is to ask, 'What's the worst thing that would happen if I failed?'" – Dave Hitz

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Here are seven simple steps to start embracing the unknown:

1. Identify what you don't like
2. Identify what you can control
3. Execute on the things that you can control
4. Make the jump
5. Persevere
6. Say yes to every new and uncomfortable situation
7. Watch your life change

Embracing uncertainty is one of the most rewarding skills you can learn. It will give you the ability to live your life with more freedom, happiness and assurance and empower you to set boundaries. It all starts with the first step.

“When you focus on being the best person you can be, you draw the best possible life, love and opportunities to you.”
– Germany Kent

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