



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Detecting Greatness: The Proof is in Our Practice But Is It In Our Comfort Zone?

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Susan Russell, BSN, RN, JD, CPAN, CAPA
ASPAN President 2017-2018

Describe your comfort zone. Do you have comfort zones at work and at home? Do you have intellectual and emotional comfort zones? What words do you associate with your comfort zones? Some words which come to mind are safe, cushy, familiar, calming, relaxed and non-threatening. Did you include boring?

What Causes Anxiety?

Now make a list of things which heighten your anxiety level. Avoiding anxiety-inducing activities is a normal response for many people. Thrill-seekers love the adrenaline rush, unlike those who prefer to stay in their comfort zones. We know that anxiety causes stress. Long-term stress may eventually lead to depression and isolation. In episodically stressful situations, we may experience muscle tension, irritability, sleeplessness, headaches, nausea, diaphoresis, palpitations and trembling. We may become short-tempered and act out.

Examples of stressful situations include test-taking, public speaking, writing for publication, interacting with strangers, traveling to unfamiliar places, and encountering unfamiliar cultures and customs. Add going back to school for a degree. In the clinical setting, we may be very uncomfortable when assigned an ICU or pediatric patient, serve as the relief charge nurse, or function as project leader for a specific initiative. Perhaps learning a new electronic health record should be on that list.

The Benefits of Adapting

The point is, that we each face challenges which lie beyond our defined comfort zones. Being able to function in new situations and unfamiliar circumstances is a tribute to our ability to adapt. And, we perianesthesia nurses excel at adapting to an ever-changing environment. When you think you have reached your limit, stretch just a little bit more. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."¹

Take the Challenge and Step Out of Your Comfort Zone

What do you have to gain from stepping out of your comfort zone? Some of these gains include success, recognition, professional advancement, personal growth and a feeling of accomplishment. So, do something which scares you, just a little bit, this autumn. You may have invested considerable time deliberating the next step on your professional journey. You may even know exactly where you would like that journey to end. If you are letting something stand in your way, make the effort to move the obstacle out of your path or work around it. Develop a strategy, be aware of the challenges, and be persistent. Climb out of the easy chair, square your shoulders, and raise your chin. Quiet your inner voice—the one encouraging you to be happy with the status quo.

There is something about which you care deeply. It ignites your passion and inspires you. Passion and conviction are tools which enable you to move out of your comfort zone. Grab your toolbox and get moving. Shed that "summer" mindset. Savor the flavors of curiosity mingled with intellectual stimulation. Get uncomfortable. After a while, the unfamiliar task or role will no longer feel like you are wearing someone else's clothes. Remember, "Great things never come from comfort zones."²

REFERENCES

1. Leadership Quotes. Available at: <http://www.inspirational-quotes.info/leadership.html>. Accessed April 13, 2017.
2. Molinsky A. *If you're not outside your comfort zone, you won't learn anything!* Available at: www.andymolinsky.com/comfort-zone. Accessed July 19, 2017.