

The Comfort Zone and the Concept of Risk

When most people think of risk, they think of downside risk only: for examples, the risk of breaking your ankle while skiing, the risk of losing money you invest, or the risk of making a fool of yourself on a stage. What they fail to consider is that the downside is only half of the risk. The other half is upside risk: the fun of skiing, the profits from an investment, and the jubilation of a successfully received performance, as counter-examples. Upside risk is the reason people are willing to expose themselves to the downside risk. A guaranteed high return upside with zero downside is a "sure thing," but there aren't many of these around. None, to be exact. You must lay something on the line in order to have a chance to be a winner.

Surely, you don't have a problem accepting the upside risk of getting something that is important to you. Heck, it's even fun to count those chickens before they hatch. Not so with downside risk. Accepting downside risk involves squirming at its reality. But, you must also accept the downside risk: that you won't get what you're after and you won't recover the time, effort and resources that have gone into it. It means leaving the comfort zone.

Reluctance to face or accept the downside risks is why too many musicians stay in the comfort zone. When you do leave your comfort zone, the most obvious risk is failure: artistic, commercial or both. You don't want to fail, you don't want to be embarrassed for failing. You're afraid that if you take your best shot and fail, the world will stop turning for you. Despite these fears, the point you've got to keep in mind is that staying in the comfort zone is guaranteed to have a microscopic payoff. Granted, there's no downside risk. **But there's no upside risk either.**

Feeling the Fear That Traps You in the Comfort Zone

You probably know somebody who's passed up a great opportunity of some sort to keep on doing the same old thing. The usual explanation for this is something like "I don't have much going for me, but at least I know exactly what I've got." What's being expressed here is the security he feels in the comfort zone of the known. What's kept him from making the change is fear.

Whether we admit it or not, most of us share fear as a major motivator. This doesn't mean that we're cowards. It doesn't mean we never overcome this fear. It means only that we have a natural tendency to