

# Your Comfort Zone

TO BE IN OR OUT OF IT: THAT IS THE QUESTION

by Courtney Weaver

**THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT MY OWN PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY** regarding the comfort zone for a person diagnosed on the spectrum. If I were to put my stance down in number form, it would be to live 60-75 percent of the time in your comfort zone and the remaining 25-40 percent outside your comfort zone. I would not be where I am today if I hadn't been pushed to try something new or decided to do something new. It's going to help you grow, and your loved ones (family, friends) are very likely going to be impressed when you try something different because it shows that you're either willing to try their interests and/or have an open mind to other things/activities. I admit that there are still some days when I don't feel like doing something new because either I'm tired, I've had a hard day or I'm overwhelmed. It's natural to feel that way. However, you have to consciously try to fit in opportunities to expand your horizons. It'll give you things to talk about to others at the very least and you can feel proud of yourself for having tried something new.

A few years ago I became really conscious of the fact that a lot of my spare time seemed to be all about reading. So when the family told me about a white water rafting opportunity on the Ottawa River, I was thrilled at the opportunity to not be a bookworm for a few hours. At the end of the day, as well as being worn out from my adrenaline rushes, I felt pride at having done the rafting on a route that included rapids and white rushing water. Of course, when you try to consciously do things outside your comfort zone, you don't have to start out with a drastic change like the personal example I've just mentioned. You can start out small. This advice can also apply to loved ones attempting to get someone on the spectrum to try something new.

In an interview for the film *Temple Grandin*, Temple herself suggests that if, for instance, someone on the spectrum is obsessed with drawing the same cartoon character, ways to get them out of doing the same thing is to get them to draw pictures of the character's car or house (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKSDSblPMpA>). This is an example of starting small to push someone out of their comfort zone.

Of course, there are certain comfortable habits, preferences and routines we all try to maintain to some extent. These things make us who we are and they can provide us with reassurance and comfort because we can feel like we are in control and it can be just what we need before we head outside into the wider world again. For example, right now, I consistently moisturize my face after having a shower or washing my face, as well as brush my hair and teeth in the morning. Not only am I taking care of myself but I feel good that I am doing what is just right for starting out my day.

There are benefits to both pushing yourself out of your comfort zone and staying in it. Incorporating both in your life helps you and your relationships with others. ■

*Courtney Weaver was born in Lahr, Germany in 1992 and was raised in Ottawa. She is from a family of five. One of her younger sisters was diagnosed with PDD-NOS. She herself was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome before she was five. After completing her elementary and secondary schooling in Ottawa, she embarked on university studies. She obtained a BA Hon. degree in History at Queen's University in Kingston, followed by a Master's in Critical Disability Studies at York University. Her favourite pastime activities include working out, reading, doing something artistic, bicycle riding, puns and walking. She tries to balance doing familiar comfortable habits with trying new things to get out of her comfort zone. She has been passionate about autism as a cause since university and her life goal is to advocate and support others on the spectrum and those closest to them.*