

AD-FREE

Chatterbox #306 – Stepping outside your comfort zone

Episode description

Stepping outside of your comfort zone can be scary, but it helps you grow as a person. In this episode, Andrew and Anna explore the science of stepping outside of your comfort zone, talk about why it's important to push yourself, and share their own stories of personal growth and overcoming challenges.

Culips' Chatterbox series is designed for intermediate and advanced English learners. Chatterbox episodes feature two native English speakers having natural conversations. Listening to these audio lessons is a great way to improve your grammar, vocabulary, and listening skills so that you can build your fluency.

Fun fact

Stepping outside of your comfort zone has a lot of benefits that include personal growth, improved self-confidence, and a greater sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in life. By embracing new experiences and facing fears, you create memorable moments and a richer, more vibrant life.

Expressions included in the study guide

- In [one's] element
- Second nature
- Sweet spot
- To put [oneself] out there
- In the long run
- In the deep end



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Chatterbox #306, Stepping outside your comfort zone, featuring Andrew and Anna.

Hello, Anna.

Anna: Hi, Andrew. How are you? And hello, everyone. Now, Andrew, what's our episode about today?

Andrew: Well, Anna, today we are talking about comfort zones, and we are going to discuss the idea of stepping outside of your comfort zone.

Anna: Yes, stepping out of your comfort zone. This is a topic I really like, and I think you guys are gonna like this one as well. Now, stepping out of your comfort zone means to challenge yourself by doing something that makes you feel stressed or anxious. And actually, stepping out of your comfort zone can be uncomfortable, but it's one of the best ways to have new experiences and grow as a person.

Andrew: I think we're gonna have a lot to talk about, Anna, specifically, because we are both living in foreign countries, away from home, and I kind of predict that a lot of our discussion will be maybe about this subject. But we'll have to see as we go along. Maybe we should first begin by talking about what the comfort zone is, because we can't really talk about getting outside of it if we don't know what it is. So, in your mind at least, how do you define the comfort zone?

Anna: Well, the comfort zone, first of all, it's invisible, I guess. But it's a place where you feel, as it says, very comfortable. For example, for me, I feel one of my biggest comfort

zones is being in my house, for example, in my tiny little flat is my absolute comfort zone. I feel happy here, I feel safe, I feel very comfortable. So, comfort zones are where we feel like we're **in our element**. Well, that's what it feels like for me, I don't know about for you, but you don't feel necessarily challenged or pushed. You're not necessarily anxious about anything, you're kind of in your zone doing what you love to do. So, for me, being in my comfort zone is great. We feel good when we're in our comfort zones.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. I think that's a good way to put it. And maybe thinking of your house is like a really easy way to understand this idea. For many people, your house is like the area where you can feel free to be yourself completely, you feel safe and comfortable.

And I like to think of the difference between doing a job or working at someplace that you've worked at for a long time. You know all your coworkers, you know all the rules, all the procedures, how to do everything, and the job is just kind of **second nature** to you, versus the first day at a new job. You know, starting a new job for the first time and maybe the night before you're really anxious and you can't sleep very well. And then you go to the workplace for the first time, and everything is awkward, and everybody is new and that feeling is like being outside of your comfort zone, right? You're in a totally new environment. You feel stressed and anxious because of that. And I think anybody who's had that feeling of starting a new job at a place that's unfamiliar to them has maybe experienced being outside of the comfort zone.

Anna: Yeah, I really like that, the way that, that kind of situation that you painted there, because it's true. Often when you do something repeatedly for a long time, like working in the same company, you're so comfortable. I mean, it's like the epitome of the comfort zone.

And actually, Andrew, I was going to pick up on something really nice that you said, I'm going to explain it to you guys, which is **second nature**. If something's **second nature**, it's like you don't even have to think about it, it's automatic, it's like you're on autopilot, I think we would say in English. So, there's lots of things that are **second nature** to us. I mean,

me and Andrew, we're teachers so, you know, when we're preparing things or classes, it's kind of **second nature**. We don't even need to apply much effort in order to do it. So, I really liked that phrase there.

But yeah, and you feel when you're outside of your comfort zone, you know it. It feels uncomfortable, you feel stressed, you feel anxious, but maybe not always a bad anxious, because sometimes being anxious can be good. Maybe it's a happy nervous, but you feel that fight or flight that we have inside us, that instinct and our bodies, they're like, "Oh, we're not in a safe place. This is not our usual thing, like what's going on?"

So our body starts playing all these types of tricks on us. So when you're out of your comfort zone, you know it but again, there's different levels of stepping outside of your comfort zone. It could be like a lot or a little bit, so I guess there's a spectrum of stepping outside of your comfort zone. It doesn't have to be something really big. Can be something small but you always know, I think, when you're outside your comfort zone or not comfortable.

Andrew: Yeah, you can definitely feel it, right? You know immediately, at least a person like me, I know immediately when I'm outside of my comfort zone. Maybe I start to feel a little bit of anxiety or stress or nervousness. And that might be related to the fact that I'm an introverted person, as we talked about in a previous Culips episode. And sometimes new situations just make me feel a little bit stressed like that.

But I guess maybe, Anna, we should back up just a moment, because I did want to highlight that when we're talking about the comfort zone, this is really more like a psychological theory, right? There's not like a physical area that's your comfort zone. This is a psychological idea. And psychologists have proposed, in fact, three zones of learning and developments. And so in the middle, you have your comfort zone where you feel very secure and safe and comfortable, hence the name. And then outside of the comfort zone is what's called the optimal performance zone. And this is a state where you feel some stress, you feel some anxiety, you feel some pressure, but you can use this pressure and stress and anxiety to actually push you to work better, or to learn more quickly, or to

achieve your goals in a better way. The idea is that if you don't have this push, then you're not going to be able to move forward in whatever you're trying to do. So, there's this **sweet spot** when you're just outside of your comfort zone, where you're in the optimal performance zone. However, outside of the optimal performance zone is the danger zone. Psychologists call this the danger zone. Isn't there a song from the 80s that talks about the danger zone?

Anna: No idea. But it sounds horrible. Just thinking about the danger zone puts me on edge.

Andrew: So, the danger zone is the psychological state where your performance actually declines, because you're feeling too much stress, too much anxiety, or too much nervousness. And, yeah, you actually do terribly in this kind of situation. So, when we're talking about stepping outside of your comfort zone, I think we're actually talking about trying to be in this optimal performance zone, right? Where this little stress, this little anxiety pushes you to do something new or something different and because of that, you're able to learn something new or do something differently or grow as a person. And, yeah, that's where we want to try and be, we don't want to be in the danger zone.

Anna: No, I mean, the danger zone says it in the label, it's not a good place to be. And I like that term that you use there, Andrew, and, guys, **sweet spot** basically means, you know, the optimum level, another similar way that we might say that it's like happy medium, somewhere in the middle. And, yeah, of course, and it comes back to what I was saying about there's a spectrum. I mean, you don't want to push yourself too far because then it's going to feel awful. But, Andrew, do you like stepping out of your comfort zone? Do you do it often? Do you make a conscious effort to try and step out of your comfort zone?

Andrew: Good question, Anna. I do make an effort to be outside of my comfort zone. I don't know if I like it. But I think, in fact, and this goes back to what I was saying at the start of the episode about living overseas, I kind of feel in a way that I'm outside of my comfort

zone almost all of the time, and living in a foreign country with a foreign language that's spoken around me all the time in a foreign culture.

You know, a lot of things feel a little bit uncomfortable but because of this experience, I do feel like I've been able to grow so much as a person and grow my understanding of the Korean language and understanding of Korean culture. For listeners who don't know, by the way, I do live right now in Korea, even though I am Canadian. So, yeah, I feel like I'm kind of always outside of the comfort zone. I don't know if I'm really in the optimal performance zone. Sometimes I am. Sometimes I'm in the danger zone. And now that I've lived in Korea for so long, I think some things that maybe were in the danger zone before are actually now in the comfort zone for me. So, that in itself is a measure of growth, I think.

Anna: Absolutely. And there's a kind of saying that we have in English, everyone, which kind of goes like this, "Nothing good happens inside your comfort zone." And it's trying to sort of say about this idea that if you want to change, if you want to grow, you've got to make yourself feel a little bit uncomfortable every now and again.

And, actually, I want to share something that's quite personal, because this for me is actually one of my personal things that I have to work on because I don't know about you guys, but during the pandemic, I kind of went right back into my comfort zone, which was being at home, doing everything online. I didn't meet many people face to face, which sometimes I can feel a bit nervous about doing that, as I'm sure maybe you guys do as well.

So, I found that after the pandemic and all of that stuff, that I was way too much in my comfort zone. So one of the things that I've been consciously trying to do, especially over the last month or a couple of months, is every day I do something, or I try and do something, even if it's something really small, like sending an email that would maybe make me feel a little bit uncomfortable, or having a conversation with somebody or going out and doing something that I wouldn't normally do. So, I try and do something every day, that just pushes me a little bit outside my comfort zone. And because I think it's really

important, like for me, personally, it's really important for me to grow and change, like, I don't want to be in the same situation I am next year, I want to be a better person, I want to be more confident, I want to be not worrying about the things that I worry about now.

But it's funny because you've got to work with your mind a little bit because your mind will tell you, "Don't do that, you're fine here, don't go out, don't meet that person, you're fine here, stay here, watch Netflix, and make something on TV." So, you have to have a little bit of a battle with your mind, getting out of your comfort zone, because it will try and stop you, it will try and keep you where it's comfortable. So I don't know if you guys have had that in your head where you kind of, gotta have this internal battle. But for me, it's super important, this idea. And stepping outside your comfort zone, it's an important term, it's quite overused. But I think it's so important for like personal growth and just trying new things. And OK, sometimes it's going to be an absolute disaster, sometimes you're going to be in the danger zone, and it's going to be awful. But I think overall, if we can get into that optimal performance zone as much as possible, then that's good.

Andrew: That's great Anna, I love that you're challenging yourself like that with just little things every day. And those little things build up, right? You can use them as stepping stones to work towards bigger goals as well, so I love that.

I have noticed that as I've gotten older, it's easier to get outside of my comfort zone, maybe I don't care as much about what other people think these days as I used to. So I'm more willing to go out of my comfort zone and to **put myself out there** and to try new things and to challenge myself in that way. And, Anna, maybe as you get a little bit older as well, you'll feel similar to me that it will get easier and easier each day.

I'm wondering if you could share about some of the things that you've learned about yourself from trying to step outside of your comfort zone? Do you have any great insights that you could share?

Anna: Do you know I'm gonna give an example and this relates to learning languages as well. So, everyone, I know that maybe you're going through this as well about how can I

push myself and challenge myself with my English. So, I'm gonna give an example for this. And I think the main learning is that you can do it, even though it feels like it's a really big thing, maybe making a phone call in English, for example, or giving a presentation or speaking to somebody in English, you can do it. But as I said before, you have got to battle a little bit with your internal systems, because your internal systems are going to tell you don't do it. And they're going to try and escape. So, I'm gonna give an example of one thing that was outside my comfort zone. Again, it's a tiny thing but these things add up, like you said, Andrew, they accumulate. So, one thing I absolutely hate doing is phoning, making phone calls in Spanish. I hate it. I hate it. I will do anything to avoid it.

Andrew: Me too actually, in Korean, I hate when somebody calls me and I see on the caller ID like, "Oh, I know this person." I get a little heart attack. I'm like, "Oh, it's so hard to talk on the phone."

Anna: Yeah, and I guess you guys made me feel like this as well. It's pretty common. OK, it's pretty common.

So, my hair needs a cut, I needed to have a haircut. Now I had two options. I could have gone the comfortable comfort zone route and I could have booked an appointment online, I didn't have to speak to anybody, and I would just turn up. Or I had the uncomfortable route, and I could have called the salon. It's literally a 15-second conversation, it's not even a long conversation and I could book the appointment that way. So, I had these two choices. And I was like, "OK get yourself together, you can do it. It's just a phone call, it's going to last 15 seconds, it will be fine. It might not be perfect."

So, I made the phone call, OK? And as per usual, I was awkward, and I didn't know exactly what to say and I didn't understand everything. But now I guess probably I feel a little bit more comfortable about making the next phone call. So, it's like that little push, you know, once you've done several little pushes, then it won't be such a big deal anymore. And maybe then I'll be much more comfortable. I won't even think about it, picking up the phone call, making a hair appointment, making a nail appointment, whatever. So, you know, for me, it's like you can do it even though it feels like in that moment, it's really hard

to push yourself outside your comfort zone, it is possible, and you can do it. You just have to have a bit of grit and kind of get on with it and kind of accept that it might not go well but it will be good for you **in the long run**, and you have to trust that.

Andrew: It'll be good for you either way, right? Like even if you tried that phone call and you completely failed and the person at the hair salon didn't understand you and you had to hang up the phone and feel embarrassed about it, you could just be like, "Well, that didn't work." And then, like, I have to try, there's something that I said that wasn't working, you'd have to like, think about your word choice or your pronunciation. And then you could try again. And so even failing, when you go outside of your comfort zone and you fail, that's still a learning experience, you can still have a takeaway from that.

Anna: And that's what I would advise, guys, as well as the if you're thinking, OK, I need to do more to push myself outside my comfort zone to step outside my comfort zone, do it step by step, small things. Doesn't need to be a huge jump. It could be, it could be a big thing, you could make a big step. Some people prefer that, some people like to make big changes all of a sudden, but, if not, just do it little by little. Pick something, the smallest thing that would make you feel like you're not in your comfort zone and try that first because I think sometimes it can be a little bit overwhelming if you think, "Oh, wow, I have to give a presentation in English. Oh, my goodness, it feels like a huge jump." So why not try maybe just practicing the introduction or having a short conversation or, I don't know, whatever. But pick a small thing to do first, if it feels like too much.

But, yeah, it's a win-win. Like you said, Andrew, it's a win-win, you win either way, if you do it, and probably you'll regret it if you don't. And I prefer not to regret things. So, you know, I don't want to live with that thing in my head of, "Oh, I should have done that," or, "I could have done that." That annoys me.

Andrew: I think we're on the same page, we have the same outlook about this, Anna, because my viewpoint is slightly different but essentially, it's the same. My viewpoint is that I want to do this one day, like I want to be able to do this goal one day, like, whatever it is, it could be really about learning any skill, right? I think about this when it comes to running,

which is my hobby, you know, like I have goals about trying to run a marathon in under 3 hours. That's my goal. It's like, I want to do that one day, well, I can't do that if I don't train, if I don't practice, right? So, like, I have to take those steps if I want to achieve my goal. I have goals of wanting to be really fluent in the Korean language. And if I don't do those little things to practice, then I'll never do that.

So it's like I try to envision my future self, my future self who has accomplished those goals had to do those little steps in order to accomplish them. So, I totally get that it's necessary to push ourselves in this way.

And, Anna, I wanted to run a comment by you that was left by one of our Culips members on our website. And this member has the username Ahva, Ahva, A-H-V-A. So, Ahva wrote on our discussion forum. "Hi, Andrew, I started to read a book in English and even though it's easy, I lost the gist frequently." Now the gist means like the main idea, right? "So, I lost the gist, I lost the main idea frequently, and it takes me a long time to read a few pages. Do you think it's a good idea to read the same book at the same time in my own language? Or is it better that I continue only in English? Can we be comfortable out of our comfort zone?"

So, I think what this member is talking about in the context of stepping outside of your comfort zone while reading a book, and I think this goes for anything in a second language, it goes for watching movies, it goes for listening to podcasts like Culips, it goes for having conversations with English speakers, and that is, can we start to feel comfortable outside of our comfort zone?

My gut feeling is like this is a really good skill to develop is to feel comfortable outside of your comfort zone when it comes to learning English, because when you feel comfortable with accepting that you're not going to understand 100% of everything, then you can just start to enjoy the process. If you have this feeling, like I have to understand everything that I hear or I can't enjoy this movie, or I have to understand every word that I see or I can't enjoy this book. I think if you have that mindset, then you're cutting yourself off from a some really great potential material that could be so beneficial or entertaining, but also that

you maybe won't be able to hit the next level with your learning goals. I'm curious, what do you think about this idea, Anna, of being comfortable outside of the comfort zone?

Anna: Yeah, I mean, of course, it's possible because I guess all it means is just that your comfort zones are shifting. So what used to be outside your comfort zone becomes in your comfort zone and so on and so forth. So, your comfort zone will just shift, you know? It will just keep shifting. What used to be more difficult becomes easier, so then you need to try something that's more difficult.

And again, there's another phrase that's often said in English, which is like there's no learning inside your comfort zone. I'm not sure whether I agree with that or not. But I mean, I guess what it's trying to say is that it can be entertaining, it can be good inside your comfort zone. But if you understand everything, for example, well, you're not really being challenged or pushed, like you said, if you understand absolutely everything in a podcast or in a movie, etc, then you're not necessarily challenging yourself. So, yeah, your comfort zone just shifts, there will always be something new, that you can make yourself feel uncomfortable about, like that will never change. There's always going to be new things. So, yeah, if it's comfortable outside your comfort zone, you've just shifted your comfort zone, essentially. That's what I think anyway.

Andrew: Yeah, I completely agree. And I guess to go back to Ahva's specific question about reading the novel, I think going back to that idea of the comfort zone, the optimal performance zone, and the danger zone is a good visualization. If you are **in the deep end** with the novel, like, if it is so hard to follow that maybe you're having to search for 100 words on each page and you can't follow the story, then maybe you're in the danger zone, and it's going to be too stressful and too difficult for you. Maybe you need to find an easier novel that is better suited for your level.

But you know, personally, I'm reading a novel in Korean right now, which I think is in the optimal performance zone for me. I don't understand everything, but I can follow the main ideas really clearly. I can enjoy the book, even without a dictionary. But if I use my dictionary, it's even better, because there are several words, you know, somewhere

between five to ten words per page that are new to me. But I find that as I go through the novel, and now I'm almost at the end, which are about 400 pages, it's a long one, you know, I'm not needing to look words up as often. And I'm really learning a lot from the reading.

So, this is like a perfect example of being in the optimal performance zone for me. So I think, yeah, you probably need to choose something that's level appropriate to start. And if you can find a book that fits that optimal performance zone, that pushes you, then that is where real learning benefits can come from.

Anna: Agreed, couldn't have said it better myself, Andrew.

Andrew: Anna, I think that will bring us to the end of this episode. So, I want to thank everybody for listening. And, guys, congratulations on doing some English listening practice today. This is exactly what you need to be doing to build your English skills. And Anna and I would love it if you could contribute to the conversation. We would love to know what you think. And you can do that by leaving a comment on our website. Please let us know about what you think and share any stories you have about being outside of your comfort zone. We would love to hear about them.

We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Anna: Bye, everyone.

Andrew: That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time, bye!

Detailed Explanations

In [one's] element

Idiom

To be **in [one's] element** means to be in a familiar and enjoyable environment. When someone is **in their element**, they feel comfortable and confident, because they're very good at what they're doing. If a situation is described as someone's element, it means that it naturally suits them and allows them to fulfil their potential.

Being **in [one's] element** means being in a situation where someone's skills and strengths are well-suited to that situation. For example, a professional athlete is **in their element** when they compete in the sport they're good at. It's a familiar environment for them; they feel comfortable and confident in this situation.

In this episode, Anna defines the term "comfort zone" as a place where you feel like you're **in your element**; you're in your zone doing what you love to do. In other words, it's a familiar and comfortable space where you feel confident and at ease, being able to use your skills and abilities to the fullest.

The expression with the opposite meaning is **out of [one's] element**. It means being in a situation where someone feels uncomfortable and not confident because it's unfamiliar or outside their area of expertise.

Here are a couple more examples with **in [one's] element**:

Holly: I saw your performance last night, you were amazing!

Adam: Thank you. I feel like I'm **in my element** when I'm on stage. Performing is something that I've always enjoyed; it's where I can truly express myself.

Holly: You're very good at it! I'll definitely be there next time you have a show.

Alice: How did your presentation go today?

Walt: It didn't go very well, to be honest. I just felt **out of my element** there. Public speaking is something I've never been good at. I just felt so nervous and couldn't wait for it to be over.

Second nature

Noun

The expression **second nature** is used to talk about something that has become so easy and natural for someone that they can do it without thinking. It's like a habit or skill that has become automatic through practice and repetition. When something is **second nature** to someone, it feels effortless and comfortable. It means that they've become really good at something, and it has become a part of who they are.

When explaining the term "comfort zone," Andrew uses an example about working somewhere for a long time. He says, "The job is just kind of **second nature** to you." In other words, if you've worked somewhere for a long time, the job becomes easy and natural for you, and you do it without thinking or worrying about it.

In response to that, Anna makes her own example, saying that for her and Andrew as teachers, preparing classes is **second nature**. They don't even need to apply much effort in order to do it; it's become a part of who they are.

Here are a couple more examples with **second nature**:

Rose: This cake is delicious! Can I get the recipe?

Daniel: Oh, I don't really follow recipes. I just improvise.

Rose: No way! How can you make something so good without a recipe?

Daniel: Well, I've been cooking for years, so it's like **second nature** to me. I don't need recipes after all these years of practice.

Steve: I can't believe how organized you are. How do you manage to handle three kids, two jobs, and all this housework?

Charlotte: It's just a habit, I guess. I've developed systems and strategies over the years, and it's become **second nature** to me. I don't even have to think about it, it just comes naturally.

Steve: I wish I could be the same. I'm a disaster when it comes to balancing stuff. I could really use some tips!

Sweet spot

Noun, informal

When talking about the three zones of learning and development, Andrew says that there's a **sweet spot** when you're just outside of your comfort zone, where you're in the optimal performance zone. **Sweet spot** is an expression used to describe the perfect point where things work best or feel just right. In other words, there's the optimum level of being outside of your comfort zone, somewhere in the middle between the comfort zone and the danger zone.

Finding a **sweet spot** means achieving the ideal balance for the best results. This expression can be used in different areas of life to describe the optimal situation. For example, when you're driving, you need to find the **sweet spot** between driving too slow and driving too fast, where the speed is optimum.

The expression **sweet spot** originated in sports like tennis and baseball, where **sweet spot** means the specific area on a racket or bat that the ball should ideally hit. These days, the expression **sweet spot** is commonly used in different contexts to describe the perfect balance or the most effective combination.

Here are a couple more examples with **sweet spot**:

Emma: I don't know what to do anymore.

Mark: What's the problem?

Emma: I've tried to be strict with my team, to keep everything under control. It didn't work. I've also tried to give them freedom and stay out of it. It didn't seem to work either. What should I do?

Mark: Well, in my experience, it's all about finding a **sweet spot** that combines control and freedom. You need to find a balance that works for both you and your team. You'll get there, just keep trying.

Amy: College is harder than I thought it would be. There's so much going on! I want to participate in some fun events but, at the same time, I need to focus on studying.

Nick: It's important to find a **sweet spot** that works for you. Make sure you get your studying done, but don't forget to make time for some socializing.

Amy: I see. I need to try to find the balance. Thanks for the advice!

To put [oneself] out there

Idiom

To put [oneself] out there means to be willing to step outside of one's comfort zone and to be open to opportunities for growth. When someone **puts themselves out there**, they expose themselves to new experiences, often by taking risks or being vulnerable.

Putting [oneself] out there can apply to different aspects of life, such as relationships, careers, or personal goals. When you **put yourself out there**, you try to overcome your fears, while being ready to face rejection or failure. It can be scary and difficult, but challenging yourself helps you grow as an individual and create meaningful connections with others.

Andrew uses this expression when talking about how it's easier for him to get outside of his comfort zone now that he's older. He says that he's more willing to go out of his comfort zone and to **put himself out there**. In other words, he's more willing to embrace new experiences and opportunities for growth, even though they may be challenging or uncomfortable.

Here are a couple more examples with **to put [oneself] out there**:

Rob: I love your garden! You've done an amazing job with it.

Sophie: Thank you. I was actually thinking of starting a blog about it.

Rob: Great idea! You should definitely do it.

Sophie: Yeah, but I'm worried about what others will think.

Rob: I know it's scary, but sometimes you just have to **put yourself out there** and take a chance. I'm sure you'll find a lot of like-minded people who share your passion!

Gregory: How was your date?

Lia: It went pretty well, actually! I had a great time. You know, I think you should start dating again, too. It's been a year since you and Paige broke up, right?

Gregory: Yeah. I'm just not sure I'm ready to **put myself out there** yet. It's scary, you know.

Lia: It is, but if you never try, you'll never meet anyone! You'll have to step outside of your comfort zone at some point.

In the long run

Idiom

In the long run is an expression used when talking about the effects of something that will happen over a long period of time. When we talk about things **in the long run**, we focus on what will happen in the future instead of the immediate results. It involves considering the bigger picture and understanding how our actions or choices can have lasting effects.

When sharing her own experience pushing herself outside of her comfort zone, Anna says that it might not go well, but it will be good for you **in the long run**. What she means is that even if you don't see the results immediately, stepping outside of your comfort zone can have positive effects over time. She uses this expression to inspire embracing challenges for personal growth and development.

The expression **in the long run** is often used to encourage others to consider the long-term benefits of doing something and to have a broader perspective of their actions and choices. For example, you won't notice immediate results after exercising for half an hour but, **in the long run**, if you keep doing it regularly, you'll get in better shape.

Here are a couple more examples with **in the long run**:

Andy: I've been trying to save more money, but it's just so hard. There're so many things I need to buy, and before I know it, all my money is gone again.

Maria: You know what really helped me? I've been putting aside a little sum of money every day. It may seem like it makes no difference, but **in the long run** all those small savings really add up. You'll be surprised at how much you can save over time.

Andy: Sound like a good idea, I'm going to try that. Thank you!

Chris: I feel so frustrated. I've been taking Spanish courses for 2 months, but it feels like I've made no progress at all! I think I'm going to quit.

Nina: I understand how you feel. Learning a language can be challenging, especially at the beginning. It takes time, you know. Don't give up just yet, keep practicing. Even if you don't see the results immediately, your skills will improve **in the long run**.

Chris: You're right. Thanks for your support!

In the deep end

Idiom, informal

In the deep end is an expression that means being in a challenging or difficult situation that requires a lot of skill and experience to handle. When someone is **in the deep end**, they are facing a task or problem that may be beyond their comfort zone, which often leads to them getting stressed out.

This expression comes from the idea of being **in the deep end** of a swimming pool, which is the part where the water is deeper and can be more difficult to swim in. Just like in swimming, being **in the deep end** means being in a challenging situation and needing to deal with unfamiliar circumstances.

In this episode, Andrew uses this expression when talking about reading a foreign-language book that is too difficult for the reader. Being **in the deep end** with a book means having to constantly search for unfamiliar words and struggling to follow the story. In this case, the reader is not only outside of their comfort zone, but possibly in a danger zone, because the book is not at a suitable for them and stresses them out.

Here are a couple more examples with **in the deep end**:

Monica: How was your first day at the new job?

Matt: It was harder than I expected! They gave me a bunch of difficult tasks right from the start, and I felt a bit overwhelmed.

Monica: Wow, they put you **in the deep end** straight away.

Matt: Yeah. But I'm determined to do my best and use this as an opportunity to learn.

Tyler: My sister asked me to look after her kids while she's away on vacation.

Laura: And how is it going?

Tyler: Honestly, it's challenging. I wasn't prepared for this. I mean, I love spending time with my niece and nephew, but taking on the full responsibility of looking after them for a whole week is a lot more difficult. I'm really **in the deep end** here!

Laura: I feel you. But you got this! It's only a week, after all.

Quiz

1. If someone is in their element in a situation, they feel _____.
 - a) confident and comfortable
 - b) anxious and nervous
 - c) incompetent
 - d) ill-suited

2. Which of the following means the perfect balance or the most effective combination?
 - a) a sour area
 - b) a salty point
 - c) a sweet spot
 - d) a sweet point

3. When you put yourself out there, you _____.
 - a) stay in your comfort zone
 - b) embrace new challenges
 - c) do something easy
 - d) care too much about what other people think

4. The expression “in the long run” is used to talk about _____.
 - a) long-distance running
 - b) something that happens immediately
 - c) something that never happens
 - d) something that happens over time

5. If someone who isn’t very good at public speaking has to give a long speech in front of a big audience, we could say that they are _____.
 - a) in the deep end
 - b) in the dead end
 - c) in the done end
 - d) in the end depth

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you often step outside of your comfort zone?
2. Where do you feel in your element?
3. What is second nature to you?
4. Describe a time when you put yourself out there. What happened?
5. Think of a time when you were in the deep end. What happened?

Quiz Answers

1.a 2.c 3.b 4.d 5.a

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Anna Connelly

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Marshall Vaillancourt

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Alina Morozova

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Cottonbro studio (Pexels.com)