



internalizing

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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Carolla states, “We can change. It’s the greatest thing about being a human being, yet we squander it every single day.” Do you agree with Mr. Carolla’s assertion that the ability to change is the greatest thing about being a human? Why or why not? What does he mean by ‘we squander it every day?’ In what ways do people squander the opportunity for emotional growth?
- Mr. Carolla explains that, “...the only way you can change is through internalizing. The way you internalize is, just about everything that happens in your life, you make yourself responsible.” What exactly does Mr. Carolla mean by this? What are some examples from your own life where you could have, and should have, internalized but didn’t?
- After sharing the hypothetical experience with the frozen yogurt, Mr. Carolla shares with us his insight that, “...if I can get into the habit of making almost everything my – not fault – but responsibility, then I can use what was a wasted trip across town into a learning experience.” Do you think that you can develop a habit of seeing expectations and outcomes as your responsibility? Why or why not? Do you think that the mindset of viewing a negative situation or outcome as a learning experience, and ultimately your responsibility, can help you mature and grow? If no, why not? If yes, what steps could a person take to evolve their mindset from that of ranting to that of taking ownership of the outcome?
- Later, Mr. Carolla reminds us that, “Change as a human being should not be something we shun. It should be something we embrace.” Why do you think that many people find change so difficult? Why do you think that so many people choose to rant rather than to own responsibility for their expectations and/or decisions?
- In addition to affirming that anyone can change if they choose to, Mr. Carolla informs us in the video that the ability to change is, “...the greatest gift we have as human beings.” Do you think that anyone can change if they are willing? Why or why not? What about this ability is a ‘gift?’ Do you see the ability to change as positive? Why or why not?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Comfortable Misery

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Are You Suffering from “Comfortable Misery?”, then answer the questions that follow.

- What is ‘comfortable misery?’ Where does it come from? Why is it so bad?
- Why do you think that people stay in negative situations, such as a miserable job or an abusive relationship, for so long? What factors contribute to someone feeling ‘locked in’ to their situation?
- What does the author of the article suggest to do to combat comfortable misery? What would Mr. Carolla tell a sufferer of comfortable misery to do?

1. What is the greatest thing about being a human being?

- a. We can change.
- b. We have fun.
- c. We can travel to different countries.
- d. We can make choices.

2. The only way to change is:

- a. Doing penance.
- b. Internalizing.
- c. Feeling guilty.
- d. None of the above.

3. The way to internalize is:

- a. Focus on how other people have hurt you.
- b. Do yoga.
- c. Making almost everything my responsibility.
- d. Blaming others.

4. If I can get into the habit of:

- a. making everything my responsibility, then I can turn it into a learning experience.
- b. blaming others, then I can stay miserable.
- c. railing against the universe, then I can avoid making my own choices.
- d. making everything my responsibility, then I can feel guilty.

5. Change is:

- a. humbling.
- b. painful.
- c. part of being human.
- d. all of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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Are You Suffering from “Comfortable Misery?”

By Taunee Besson, CMF, CareerCast.com Senior Columnist



Question: I’m a highly paid executive who’s good at my job, but I hate it. Every Sunday my stomach ties in knots and [I dread the thought of going to work in the morning](#). If my compensation package and the job prestige weren’t so high, [I would leave in a minute](#). Unfortunately, my golden handcuffs are firmly secure. If I’m so good at what I do, why am I so unhappy?

Answer: How many of these statements apply to you?

- ☐ I’m counting the months/years until I retire.
- ☐ I hate my job, but love the income.
- ☐ My job situation is bound to get better if I just keep hanging in there.
- ☐ I may not like my current career, but I know I’m good at it.
- ☐ I’m constantly worried about my position being eliminated.
- ☐ I’ve lost interest in my work, but I enjoy the camaraderie of the people.
- ☐ My associates know the caliber of my work. I don’t have to keep proving myself.
- ☐ The chances of my finding a job I will truly enjoy are slim and none.

_____ When friends talk about their new careers, I wish I had the courage to make a change as well.

_____ Changing careers is much more risky than staying where I am.

_____ I doubt I can find an equivalent position at another company.

_____ I would rather swim with sharks than start a job search.

_____ I tend to focus on the negatives of a career change, rather than contemplating the positives of its potential.

_____ My family and friends think I'm in the catbird's seat. They tell me I'd be crazy to make a change.

_____ Work isn't meant to be satisfying. That's why it's called work.

If you checked just one of the above statements, maybe you're just having a bad day. If you checked two or more you're probably suffering from a self-inflicted malady called "Comfortable Misery", a career syndrome characterized by inertial thinking and an overwhelming need to maintain the status quo.

Those suffering from Comfortable Misery run efficiently on autopilot. They go through the motions of completing their projects and emptying their in-baskets, while experiencing little joy, learning, or feeling of genuine satisfaction. They're like zombies in business suits.

[Why do these talented professionals cling to the jobs they hate?](#) There are lots of reasons:

- The U.S.A. was founded by individuals who believed in the Puritan work ethic -- we were put on this earth to atone for our sins, not have a good time. Americans continue to take this mindset to heart. Therefore, millions of workers define their work as a means of providing for their families and practicing productivity. They live to work, not work to live. The thought of enjoying their careers produces more guilt than pleasure.
- Along with the Puritan work ethic, Baby Boomers' parents have imbued their children with the "Depression Mentality":

"Never forget, you are lucky to have any job, let alone one you enjoy.

"Your work puts food on the table and a roof over your head."

"You labor to support yourself."

"Personal satisfaction is for dilettantes."

- Many very talented professionals [question their marketability](#). Often they've been employed by one company for a number of years and find it difficult to believe anyone else will hire them. Also, because they've never built a network of colleagues outside their firm, they have no understanding of how their skills and experience can transfer to the world beyond company X.
- Confirmed optimists and pessimists tend to embrace the status quo. Optimists are sure things will get better, if they stick around long enough. With relieved resignation, they put the responsibility for their careers in the hands of fate or their corporate leadership. Pessimists assume there are no truly satisfying positions anywhere, so why expend the effort looking for one. Isn't it ironic how two opposing attitudes both lead to the same paralyzing conclusion!

- Golden handcuffs account for a lot of Comfortable Misery. A prestigious company, attractive compensation package, big title and the promise of more to come keep people from leaving jobs they hate. The thought of giving up an accustomed lifestyle can tether an unhappy executive to his corner office, when he longs to catch the green wave at the helm of a bare-bones start-up.
- “The Black Hole Syndrome” also keeps millions of unhappy professionals mired in unsatisfying careers. When a person is frustrated and unmotivated by a position that provides no opportunity to learn or make a contribution, doing his job can suck all the energy out of him. When just showing up at work each day is such a tremendous effort, he can’t imagine looking for another job simultaneously. His situational depression also has a devastating effect on his self-esteem. Like the clinically depressed, people experiencing the Black Hole Syndrome can think they don’t deserve to escape their current situation.
- Feedback from those we love and trust often causes us to rely on the status quo instead of pursuing something better. It’s very common for people to stay in jobs they hate because their friends and family keep saying, “You’re so good at what you do. Why would you ever want to change?”
- A comfortable work environment that doesn’t expect too much, appreciates your work and surrounds you with friendly colleagues can be a very enticing place, even when the job leaves much to be desired. For those having motivational difficulties, it’s a great spot to veg.
- How many job seekers do you know who enjoy the process of finding another position? Probably not many. Lots of professionals stay where they are because they can’t face the prospect of looking for a new opportunity. A [job search](#) is hard work, often full of rejection. Unless a merger or downsizing forces them into it, a number of dissatisfied careerists will sacrifice long-term gain to avoid short-term pain.

If any of the above reasons resonate with you, you are suffering from a bonefide Comfortable Misery. This is a treatable syndrome, but only you have the power to cure yourself.



Senior Columnist Taunee Besson, CMF, is president of Career Dimensions, Inc., a consulting firm founded in 1979 that works with individual and corporate clients in career transition, job search, executive coaching, talent management and small business issues. She is an award-winning columnist for CareerJournal.com and a best-selling author of the Wall Street Journal's books on resumes and cover letters. Her articles on a variety of career issues have appeared on numerous career/job websites and trade and business journals. Ms. Besson has been quoted numerous times in The Wall Street Journal, The Dallas Morning News, Business Week, Time, Smart Money, and a number of other websites and publications.