

**A sample activity from the
Fenman trainer's resource:**

Using Emotional Intelligence At Work

Written by Mike Bagshaw

Thank you for downloading this sample activity. You are welcome to use this material in your courses.

This sample activity is just one of 17 contained in the trainer's activity pack '*Using Emotional Intelligence at Work*', published by Fenman. Details of the other activities are given at the end of this document.

Using Emotional Intelligence at Work

Contents:

- Introduction
- About this resource
- Activity 4: The art of letting go: you'll never be a butterfly if you can't stop being a caterpillar
- Full contents listing: 17 activities

Introduction:

How confident are you on the subject of Emotional Intelligence? Are you already committed to the concept but need help in putting it across in your organisation? Or perhaps you don't feel that you know enough to be competent to train people in it ...

Whatever your knowledge of Emotional Intelligence, you could soon be delivering its benefits. These activities need your skills as a facilitator, but don't need you to be an expert on the subject. The expertise is all here in this pack. You'll quickly learn the concepts and the techniques. You'll benefit from introducing these modules into existing training programmes such as leadership, coping with change, dealing with stress and conflict, personal development, motivation, and communication skills.

With the knowledge and activities in *Using Emotional Intelligence at Work*, you can

- **show people how to harness the energy of negative emotions for positive outcomes**
- **equip managers and their teams to cope with obstacles and disappointments better**

- **show people how to become resilient** to problems and **persistent** in pursuing success
- help people to **motivate** themselves and others
- **give people the confidence and emotional ability to manage change** – to ‘let go’ when they need to, to embrace new ideas and procedures and to welcome change as a step forward towards continuous improvement and development.
- **improve communication** by helping your people to recognise and express their feelings

Price: £195 plus carriage. No VAT.

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Activity 4

The art of letting go

Purpose

To help participants overcome the fear of change and to give them the courage to try out the new, without being reckless, and in a way that ensures growth and learning.

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

Activity 4

The art of letting go

Introduction

You'll never be a butterfly if you can't stop being a caterpillar

The status quo, by definition, is the accepted way of doing things. It's the path of least resistance, and for that reason it can be attractive. But the status quo has to change, and keep changing, or we'd still be living in caves. Each change has brought with it some resistance. You have to let go of the old to let in the new.

Change brings loss. Even good change means something has gone. It may be easy or hard to let that go, but it should be acknowledged. People sometimes get stuck in the past because there is something they can't put behind them. They can't accept the loss, so they can't move forward.

This activity is designed to help people leave their old comfort zones and try out the new. It may be scary, but it's also exciting.

Purpose

To help participants overcome the fear of change and to give them the courage to try out the new, without being reckless, and in a way that ensures positive growth and learning.

Application

This activity can be used as part of any programme of change or personal development.

What happens

The activity starts with a brief discussion of a joke that carries some profound messages about personal change. There follows a discussion of risk-taking, which is reinforced by small group discussions on the risks the participants have taken in their own lives. This is then linked to the concept of comfort zones and the experience of loss.

Finally, the participants do an exercise to look at the motivational balance between the fears of

change and the benefits of the status quo (comfort zone) and the risks of the status quo and the benefits of change (the risk zone).

Time

Overall time required: 2 hours

Materials & resources

- Butterfly joke: 10 minutes
- Risk: 45 minutes
- Comfort zones: 15 minutes
- The motivational balance: 45 minutes
- Summary: 5 minutes


- 3 OHT masters:
 - 4.1 *The butterfly joke*
 - 4.2 *Comfort zones*
 - 4.3 *The motivational balance*

- 4 Handout masters:
 - 4.4 *Risk*
 - 4.5 *Risk, change and choice*
 - 4.6 *The self-defeating spiral of risk avoidance*
 - 4.7 *Blockers and drivers*

- Overhead projector and screen
- Flipchart and stand or whiteboard
- Marker pens for trainer
- Paper and pens for participants
- Space for small-group work

How do I do it?

BUTTERFLY JOKE

	Show OHT 4.1 <i>The butterfly joke</i>
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Ask the group this question: 'What issues about personal change are embodied in this joke?'. The responses should be that people:

- don't realise their potential
- fear the unknown
- tend to see the world from where they are now
- can't anticipate what the future will bring
- should never say never.

Growing and developing involve letting go of something. Letting go involves risk. Where there is risk, there is doubt. Where there is doubt, there is fear.

RISK

Ask the group, 'What are people scared of when they're considering making a change in their lives or careers, or in the way they do things?'

List their ideas on the flipchart.



Talk through Handout 4.4 Risk, drawing out experiences from the group, and giving examples from your own experience. Start by asking the group to consider the diving scenario as a metaphor for taking risks. It might also be a useful lead-in to ask them if they can remember the first time they prepared for a dive. Point out that where there is risk, there is doubt. Where there is doubt there is fear. Resolving that fear is part of making the decision.

Courage is about accepting fear as part of the process. It doesn't mean ignoring danger signs, or pretending not to be scared. That's recklessness.


Courage means considering emotional and practical considerations, then deciding, and following the decision through. That process may or may not dissolve the fear. If it doesn't, you have to 'feel the fear, and do it anyway'. Go on to draw out personal experiences of the six fears that are listed in the handout.

Divide the group into groups of three or four. Give them the task of discussing significant changes in their lives, and ask them to answer the following questions:


- what were the risks you perceived at the time?
- what did you lose?

- what did you gain?
- what did you learn about your ability to let go and take risks?

Allow 15 minutes for discussion. Then bring the groups together and draw out the key themes, in particular, that we all have choices when faced with significant change. We can stay where we are – doing nothing is a choice – or we can plan to move forward. Whatever we choose will involve losses and gains, fears and uncertainties. However, we can avoid becoming immobilised by our fears of change by imagining how we are going to deal with difficulties, thinking of obstacles as opportunities and choices, recognising our emotions as normal reactions to difficult events, and expecting to succeed. Handout 4.5 Risk, change and choice, and Handout 4.6 The self-defeating spiral of risk avoidance summarise and illustrate these points.

	<p>Distribute Handout 4.5 <i>Risk, change and choice</i> and Handout 4.6 <i>The self-defeating spiral of risk avoidance</i></p>
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COMFORT ZONES

	<p>Show OHT 4.2 <i>Comfort zones</i></p>
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Talk through OHT 4.2 Comfort zones, making the following points about change and letting go:

- every change involves some form of loss and letting go of something that is familiar
- moving from a comfort zone requires going from the known to the unknown.

Comfort zones are those areas in people's lives (people, places, activities, beliefs and assumptions) where they feel comfortable, especially when the rest of the world is in turmoil. This is all right up

to a point. The trouble is that people tend to assume that these comfort zones will always be there and then, when changing circumstances challenge this assumption, they react with stress and alarm, followed by the fight or flight response. They feel out of place, and might experience physical pain.

If we want to learn, grow and develop, we have to stay with this discomfort, and be willing to let go of at least some aspects of our comfort zones.

Letting go is all about coping with loss. When we can't accept a loss, we carry it with us, and we may become emotionally frozen. In a sense, in order to grow, we have to attend our own funeral from time to time.


If we can let go and work through the discomfort of change, and reach out to a new future, we give ourselves the opportunity to enter a new expanded comfort zone, with new resources and experiences for coping with change. If we have high self-efficacy and high self-esteem, along with realistic self-awareness this will be much easier.

Put the words *self-efficacy*, *self-esteem*, and *self-awareness* on the flipchart and ask the group what these terms mean to them. Define them as follows:

- **Self-esteem** is valuing yourself and your abilities.
- **Self-efficacy** is believing you can influence your own situation.
- **Self-awareness** is knowing your strengths and weaknesses.

Make the point that we are likely to move out of the comfort zone when we perceive the value of the status quo as significantly less than that of the proposed change. Value, in this context, means an assessment of the positives and negatives of 'change and no change', or the 'blockers and drivers'. OHT 4.3 The motivational balance, will help to explain this.

THE MOTIVATIONAL BALANCE

	Show OHT 4.3 <i>The motivational balance</i>
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Describe the motivational balance as weighing up the blockers and drivers to change. This will take about 5 minutes.

When the blockers feel stronger than the drivers	People resist change and stay in the comfort zone
---------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------

When the drivers feel stronger than the blockers	People are more likely to leave the comfort zone and make the change
---------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------

When the weightings are equal or uncertain	People feel ambivalent. This leads to procrastination about change or the feeling of going round in circles
---------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Ask the group to form pairs.

	Distribute Handout 4.7 <i>Blockers and drivers</i>
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Go through the instructions in Handout 4.7 Blockers and drivers. Give each person 10 minutes to talk in their pairs about an important life and career change that they have considered. Ask them to note the strength of the blockers and drivers.

After the 20 minutes, bring the group together. Tell the participants that our view of blockers and drivers isn't always rational. We usually overestimate the risks of change, and underestimate the risks of staying in their comfort zones. We need to be able to challenge our assumptions about the blockers and drivers.

Run a 10-minute discussion around the following questions:

1. How do we know our fears of change are real?
2. How do we know that the status quo is safe?
3. How do we know we have fully appreciated the benefits of change?
4. What insights have you gained about your ability to let go and move out of your comfort zones?

SUMMARY

Summarise by saying that letting go has both cognitive and emotional elements. The first step is when people believe that there is a gap between where they are now and where the change will take them. They have to feel that the positives of change are greater than the positives of no change. This will lead to frustration, and might motivate them to move out of the comfort zone.

Once out of their comfort zone, they need to live with the discomfort, to experience the sense of loss and resist the urge to return to the status quo. This can sometimes feel scary, but as Susan Jeffers says in the title of her book, we need to *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*.

Thank everyone for their participation.

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

The butterfly joke

4.1

*A beautiful butterfly flies
over the garden.*

4



*A caterpillar looks up and
says:*

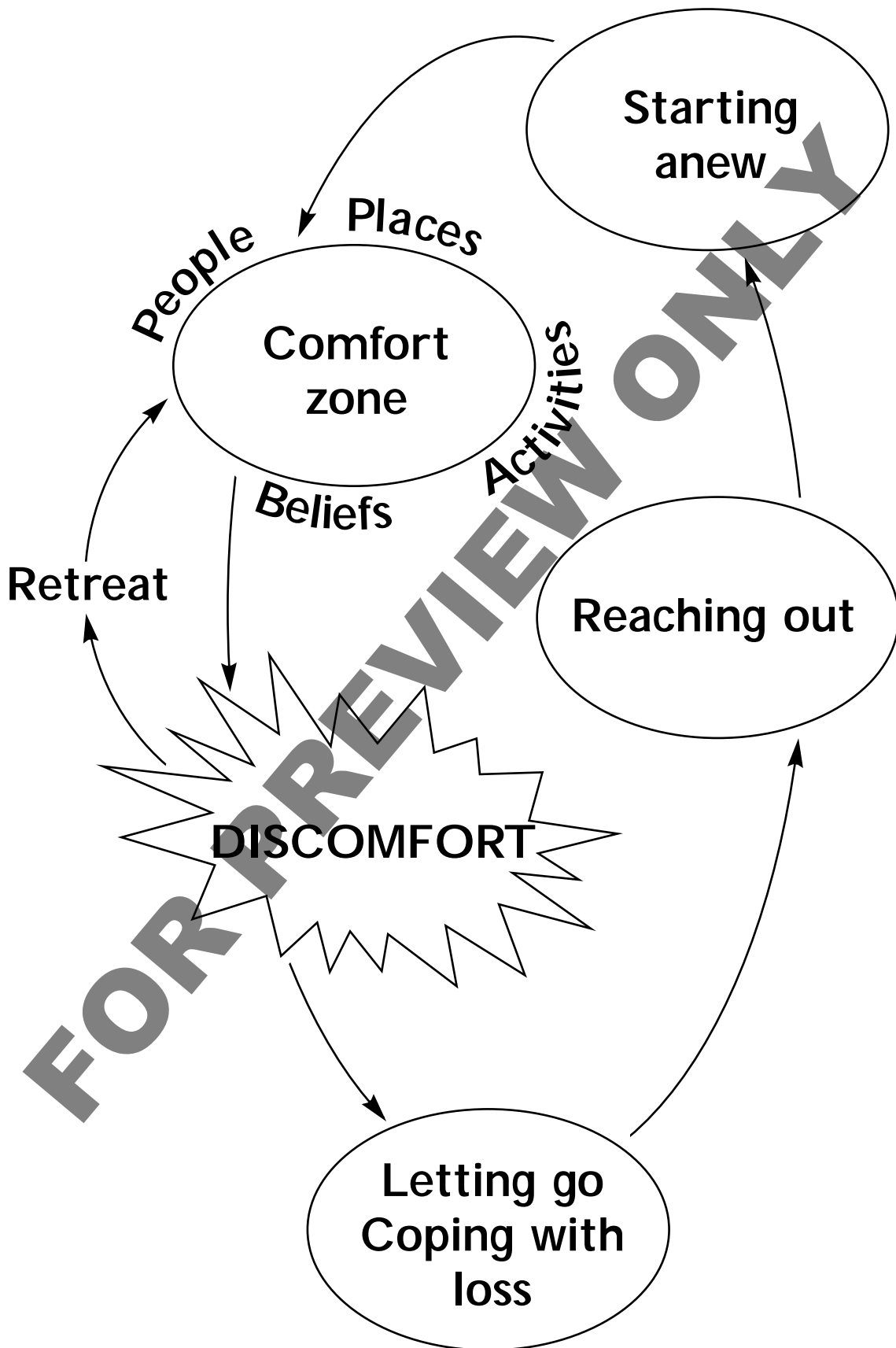
*'You'll never get me up in
one of those.'*



4-9

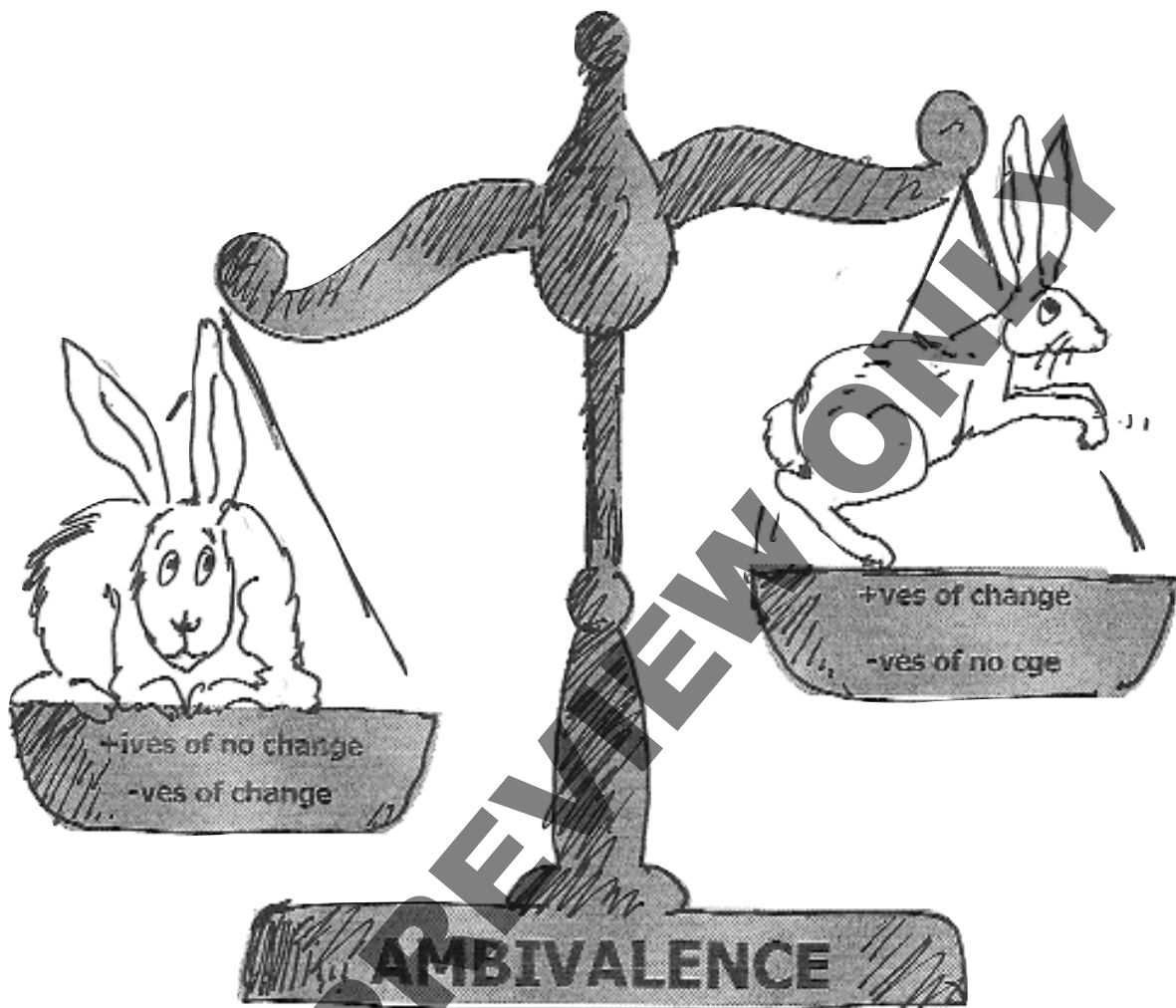
Comfort zones

4.2



The motivational balance

4.3



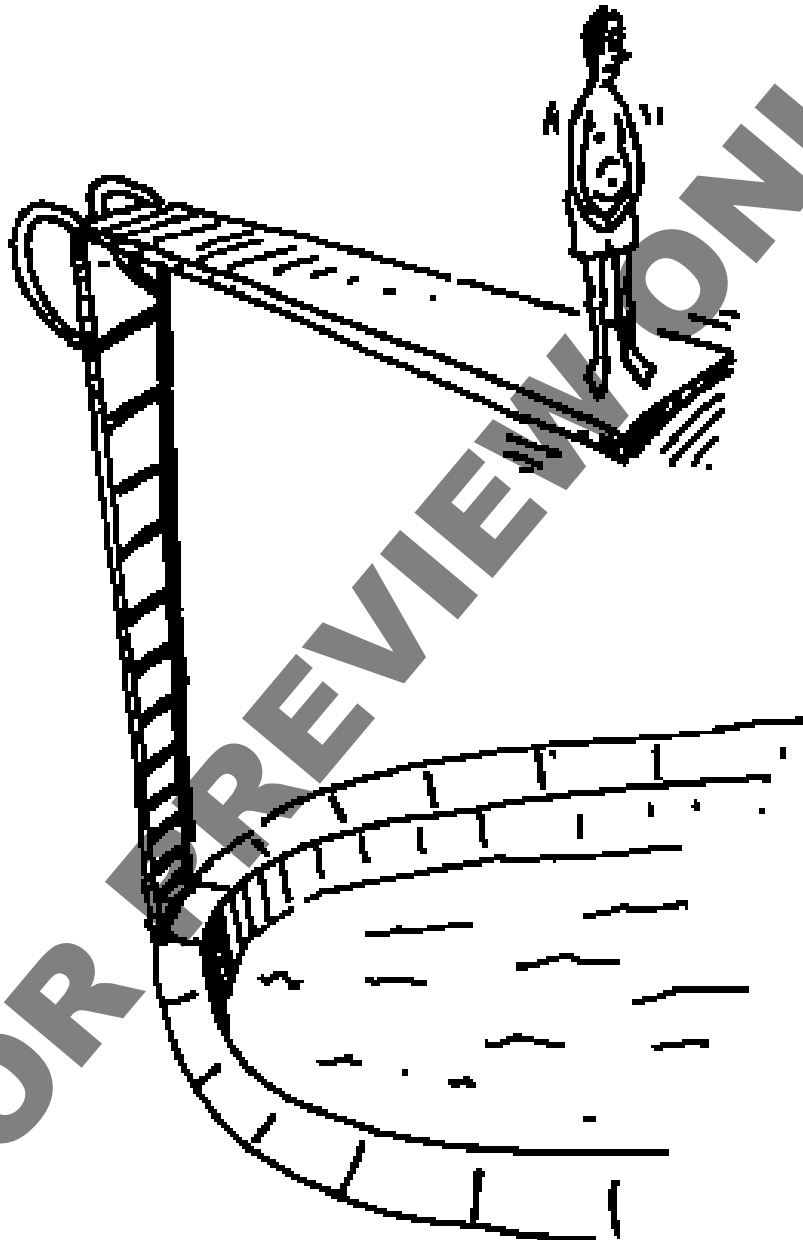


Risk

4.4

You are on a diving board, much higher than any diving board you've been on before.

You're going to dive, or jump, or not.



'What if I do, what if I don't?'

How do you decide? How do you feel?

Continued ...



Risk

... continued

4.4

What are you scared of?

Typically, there are six main fears:

1. **Failure** – we might not get what we're aiming for; but we haven't got it now, so why should we fear failure? If we don't try, we can't succeed.
2. **Exposure** – if it doesn't come off, it might reflect on our abilities. We get confused between the failure of something we try to do, and being a failure ourselves. One certain way to fail is not to try.
3. **Embarrassment** – if we push something through, and it doesn't work, we might feel others are judging us. An emotionally unintelligent way to solve this is to keep things the same, but feel sorry for ourselves.
4. **Conflict** – if others don't share our opinion on something, it may feel as though they are hostile to us. The emotionally unintelligent give hostility in return. They waste valuable opportunities to share views.
5. **Rejection** – if risks go haywire, could you lose friendships, or even your job? People often think this is likely to happen, without thinking about the actual people involved. It's better to talk things through than to assume the worst.
6. **Loss** – any change means loss. The familiar may have disadvantages, but being with what you know creates a comfort zone. To progress, we have to be willing to walk out of these comfort zones.



4





Risk, change and choice

4.5

When you are faced with change and uncertainty, remember:

You usually have several choices, one of which is to leave things exactly as they are. This might mean taking a risk; for example, not going to the doctor about something that's worrying you. Doing nothing is a decision to do nothing.

Other choices involve making plans, including finding out what's needed, taking steps to fulfil those needs, and moving towards the decided goal. There will be other choices before the goal is achieved, which will bring new discoveries and new ideas. Other people may be involved and be part of the goal-seeking process.

Remember, any personal change you make will usually involve:

- LOSS** – changing in any way involves losing something of the self. It's almost as if you periodically have to attend your own funeral, to say goodbye to certain aspects of yourself.
- FEAR** – which comes from the supposed negative effects of the change.
- DILEMMA** – which is the ambivalence of not knowing whether the pros or the cons are more important.
- GAIN** – which is the benefit from going forward with the change.

It isn't healthy to stay stuck on the diving board

You can prepare yourself for change by:

- thinking about the worst possible result. How would you deal with that?
- talking to people who've done something similar
- thinking of dilemmas as choices rather than problems
- running a pilot before you do the real thing, if you can
- recognising your emotional reactions – don't pretend you're a purely logical being
- expecting to succeed. Optimistic people succeed more often, because they don't see setbacks as decisive, and keep trying
- remembering that no risk = no change = stagnation. See Handout 4.6 The self-defeating spiral of risk avoidance, for a diagram illustrating the spiral of risk avoidance.

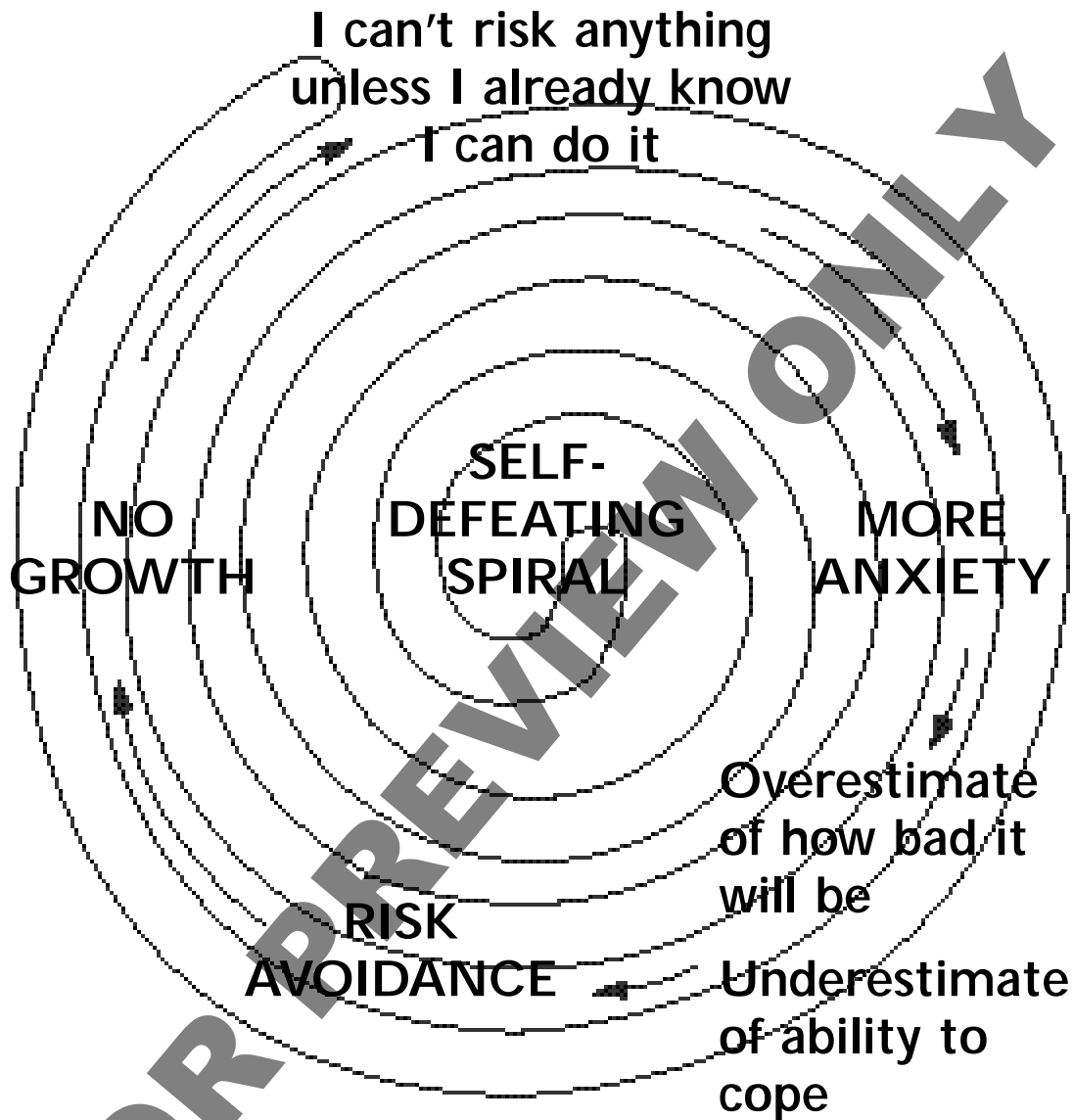




The self-defeating spiral of risk avoidance

4.6

4





Blockers and drivers

4.7

1. Choose an important life and career change that you have considered or are considering, but which feels a little risky.
2. First, discuss the blockers with your partner for about 5 minutes.

The blockers consist of:

- A** What I would be sorry to lose if I changed.
- B** My fears about change.

3. Now discuss the drivers with your partner for about 5 minutes.

The drivers consist of:

- C** The benefits I would gain if I changed.
- D** The things I would be glad to leave behind if I changed.

4. Now rate how strong the blockers and drivers feel by putting a line on each of the scales.

Blockers		Drivers	
Very strong	Very weak	Very strong	Very weak
A		C	
B		D	

What are your thoughts and feelings now about the change?



Contents

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1. The emotional side of business success: *the hard case for soft skills*

This activity is an overview of the exciting development in people management – Emotional Intelligence. It develops understanding about how Emotional Intelligence can transform the way we conduct our business, by the way we handle our most valuable asset – people. Also, participants will be able to assess themselves on the key Emotional Intelligence competencies to enhance their personal effectiveness.

2. Learned optimism for success: see *the doughnut, not the hole*

To do more than survive – to thrive in a world of accelerating change and uncertainty – we need to respond well to adversity. This activity uses self-assessment, pairworking and small-group work to develop a more positive and purposeful emotional response to difficulty, so participants can build a better future for themselves and their teams.

3. Controlling negative thoughts: *talk yourself out of defeat*

The way we talk to ourselves can affect our sense of well-being and our ability to motivate ourselves in the face of challenge. This activity demonstrates this in a powerful way.

A combination of self-assessment, personal experiences, and brief presentation inputs will enable the participants to respond more

purposefully to difficult events. They will learn how to replace negative self-talk with motivational self-talk. This will help to bring about a positive and creative climate at work and help participants to be proactive and take control.

4. The art of letting go: *you'll never be a butterfly if you can't stop being a caterpillar*

This activity tackles the essence of coping effectively with change and letting go of old ways of thinking and doing. Challenging existing concepts enables the participants to understand their own resistance to change. An exercise provides them with a practical tool to help them take appropriate risks and move forward.

5. Anger control: *it's not awful not getting what you want*

Many people have difficulty dealing with anger – both their own and other people's. Frustrations build up in the fast-changing workplace, where roles are ill defined and the security of hierarchy has gone. This sometimes leads to destructive anger.

Anger usually results from frustration. Frustration results from people feeling unable to control and improve their situation. A sense of control is a basic human need. Frustration behaves like an emotional virus, infecting everyone. This activity uses a combination of pairworking practice to look at anger and how we deal with it, an emergency self-calming procedure, and an imagination exercise where participants rehearse various response options to anger-provoking situations to help them to eliminate the anger that stands as a barrier to success.

- 6. Emotions and complex decision making: *don't make the same mistake as Descartes***
We can't negotiate complex and unpredictable change effectively by logic alone. We need to get in touch with the feeling side of ourselves. We need to feel the rightness and wrongness of decisions.

This activity uses a series of practical exercises to demonstrate how we can use our imagination and senses creatively to help us assess complex situations, and make rational and effective choices.

- 7. Increasing sensitivity: *surveying the emotional landscape***

In today's busy work environment, it is all too easy to ignore the mood and morale of those around us. People do not necessarily communicate how they feel. However, being insensitive to the needs and feelings of others makes it hard to gain their support and enthusiasm.

The powerful experiential exercises in this activity increase sensitivity to the verbal and non-verbal indicators of underlying feelings and needs. They also help to develop emotional literacy; that is, the ability to recognise our own emotions and the emotions of those around us.

- 8. Empathic inquiry: *investing in understanding before being understood***

In difficult times, people often want to be rescued by an all-providing, all-knowing manager, or parent figure. This is only ever advisable in cases of immobilisation by trauma. In normal difficulties, the way forward is for people to help themselves. The key skill is to show empathy. This means 'feeling with' – being able to move round in the other person's world without being sucked in.

This activity teaches the basic empathy skills of generative listening, reflecting and challenging. From this, participants will be able to demonstrate their understanding, which will help others to recognise their own resources, and be able to draw on them.

9. Expressing how we feel: *playing the music behind the words*

We all know that feelings have a profound impact on success or failure. Yet the typical work environment does not seem to acknowledge this. Feelings seem to be treated as irrelevant to the core purpose of the business. We need to get across what we feel, in a way that is business enhancing rather than business limiting.

Good leaders are good communicators. Not only do they say what they mean clearly and briefly, they also inspire commitment by communicating with passion, and telling stories that tap into people's deeper feelings.

They also need to express discomfort, frustration and disagreement in an assertive way, without invalidating the other person.

This activity develops the skill of expressing difficult feelings in a way that clears the air, inspires others, and moves things forward.

10. Developing trust: *you only get it if you give it*

In the new boundary-less organisation, hierarchies no longer control relationships. Everyone at every level needs to develop networks, partnerships and alliances across the board. The skill is to build relationships of credibility and trust quickly, and to influence without hierarchical authority.

By using a stimulating combination of physical trust exercises, facilitated discussion, and a trust network exercise, this activity looks not

only at how we can build trusting relationships, but also at the underlying feelings and beliefs that block or facilitate building trust. It shows how we can establish win-win relationships when we start from different positions.

11. Managing conflict: *resolving to resolve*

Conflict in itself is not bad. However, it is business limiting when it is driven by self-interest, 'get you later' games and the desire to protect territory.

People get attached to their own ideas, and may protect them fiercely, rather than let new ideas flow in, merging with, modifying or replacing the old. You sometimes get raging conflict instead of a stimulating cross-flow of ideas.

The faster things change, the more likely people are to cling on to the old, because it seems more secure; it becomes evermore important to create a climate where a variety of viewpoints is welcomed. If difference leads to conflict, it needs to be faced – managed, not avoided. This activity uses a self-assessment exercise and a powerful simulation to help participants to understand their own response to conflict and to help them to engage in constructive discontent rather than destructive animosity.

12. Building stress immunity: *adjusting our sails to the wind*

Employees are faced with more and more information; at the same time, situations are less predictable, and their boundaries less clearly defined. This creates uncertainty and stress. To operate effectively in a fast-moving world of increasing pressure people need to be in command of their emotional responses.

By using a series of self-assessment exercises, this activity helps people to recognise the signs of stress and to develop effective stress prevention and management strategies.

13. Helping difficult customers: *using difficulties as a source of continuous improvement*

When customers are dissatisfied and start venting their feelings, they can unnerve the most placid of employees.

If you aren't in touch with your own feelings, you may have difficulty dealing with strong emotions, and start being defensive. This just makes things worse. You need to defuse the situation, as well as ensuring the customer gets and appreciates the best possible service.

This activity uses role-play with skills practice to look at emotionally intelligent ways of helping difficult customers.

14. Healing the wounds: *understanding and handling the emotional side of downsizing change*

Changing market demands, mergers and acquisitions and the need to reduce costs will continue. This means that downsizing and major restructuring will be part of our working lives for the foreseeable future. This has a major impact on the morale of the survivors. There are decrements in performance that can last a surprising amount of time.

This activity gives an overview of the key issues involved. The focus is on the emotional fall-out, how to minimise the adverse effects, and how to make a success of restructuring. A combination of storytelling, role-play, and brainstorming exercises are used to help participants to play a positive part in downsizing change.

15. Surviving office politics: *navigating the dark side*

People spend a great deal of time on internal politics and gameplaying in many organisations, often to the detriment of the business and working relationships. However, people also need to use informal communication channels to be effective. These positive and negative aspects of the informal side of the organisation represents the organisation's emotional 'shadow side'. Emotions add depth and colour to our working lives but inappropriate expressions of emotion can be very damaging.

This activity addresses the question of how to behave in an emotionally intelligent way, being neither naïve nor acting with cynicism, in the shadows of the organisation. A powerful exercise is used to amplify the issues around co-operation versus self-interest. Participants will also assess their own political shrewdness and conduct an exercise on dealing with the difficult boss.

16. Managing diversity: *valuing differences and getting the best from diversity*

Managing diversity is a people management process that uses the diverse attributes, skills, backgrounds and talents of the workforce to deliver greater productivity, growth and innovation.

The activity focuses on the emotional issues associated with diversity. Through a process of discussion and self-assessment it shows how we can overcome resistance to valuing differences and create a climate of inclusion – not exclusion.

17. Creating the future: *what we do now leads to where we will be*

With the increasing uncertainty in today's workplace, people have to be able to deal with the tension between managing the present and creating the future. With so much information to process, and so many tasks and opportunities, the sense of urgency can feel like tyranny. This is not a healthy feeling. People need to take time out to establish what is important, and what needs to be done to build the future. At the same time they need to be able to produce results on a day-to-day basis. How they use their discretion in managing their time to both manage day to day and to build for the future will be crucial for their own success and the success of their organisations.

This activity uses a time management exercise and a visioning exercise to help the participants resolve this dilemma.

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

About this resource

This Trainer's Activity Pack has 17 activities that focus on the emotional dimensions of working life. In the past, emotions have been seen simply as a hindrance to rational processes and efficiency. Yet we all know that organisations are a cauldron of emotions, both positive and negative, which have a powerful influence on the success or failure of an enterprise. Far from getting rid of emotions, we need to use them and work with them.

Energy, enthusiasm, collaborative relationships, effective communication, confidence, compassion – these are all needed to make an organisation great.

Occupations like social work, teaching, psychology and HR management have always recognised the need for Emotional Intelligence, even before it was given that name. Other occupations, like accountancy, engineering and biochemistry bear the traditional stereotype of being emotion-free zones. They too are coming to realise that behaving in an emotionally intelligent way is essential for business success.

Everyone needs to take responsibility for creating a work environment where people feel committed, involved and respected. This will capture the collective brainpower of all our people, regardless of their work role, cultural group, background or experience. The best ideas might come from anywhere. To achieve the sort of climate where ideas will surge forward, you need an emotionally intelligent workforce. The head needs to work with the heart, especially in this world of uncertainty, complexity and change.

My own experience of consultancy in the field of people development provides the inspiration behind this resource. I believe firmly that to realise the full potential of people, we have to work with them in a spirit of learning and discovery. We need to recognise we are whole beings, with histories of success and failure, values, aspirations, families, pressures, interests and skills. All these dimensions are dynamically interdependent. They will impact on our behaviour in the workplace.

We have only just begun to understand the need to take account of the whole person. We are struggling with bullying in the workplace, managing diversity, empowerment, creative dialogue and shared knowledge and learning. All these elements of modern organisational background are underpinned by the interplay of behaviour, beliefs, and especially emotions.

The activities in this resource pack give opportunities to address emotional issues directly. Experiential exercises provide real experience of the power of emotions, positive and negative, in the workplace. These are interspersed with presentations that provide frameworks, tips and checklists to make the points and issues memorable.

This pack owes a great debt to the work of Daniel Goleman. He had the intuition to realise that bringing a number of social and psychological processes under one umbrella would give a powerful new way of understanding ourselves, as well as the teams and organisations in which we give so much of our time, energy, skill and emotional resources.

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