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The Discomfort Zone: How Leaders Turn Difficult Conversations Into Breakthroughs



Synopsis

You want people to stretch their limits, but your conversations meant to help them often fall flat or backfire, creating more resistance than growth. Top leadership coach Marcia Reynolds offers a model for using the Discomfort Zone—the moment when the mind is most open to learning—to prompt people to think through problems, see situations more strategically, and transcend their limitations. Drawing on recent discoveries in the neuroscience of learning, Reynolds shows how to ask the kinds of questions that short-circuit the brain's defense mechanisms and habitual thought patterns. Then, instead of being told, people see for themselves the insightful and often profound solutions to what is stopping their progress. The exercises and case studies will help you use discomfort in your conversations to create lasting changes and an enlivened workforce.

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Customer Reviews

I read and reviewed Marcia Reynolds' previous book, *Wander Woman: How High-Achieving Women Find Contentment and Direction* (2010), and then interviewed her. She has a keen interest in interactive relationships between and among people who are struggling to cope with a world in which change is the only constant, especially now when change happens more often and faster than at any prior time that I can remember. She has an insatiable curiosity to understand what works, what doesn't, and (especially) why. Over the years, she has helped leaders in countless companies to create and then sustain a workplace culture within which personal growth and professional development are most likely to thrive. In her latest book, *The Discomfort Zone*, she shares her thoughts about how to thrive during moments of uncertainty when people are most

receptive to learn. As Reynolds explains, "In order to define who we are and make sense of the world around us, our brains develop [or embrace] constructs and rules we strongly protect without much thought. This is what James O'Toole has in mind when suggesting, in *Leading Change*, that the strongest resistance to change tends to be cultural in nature, the result of what he so aptly characterizes as "the ideology of comfort and the tyranny of custom." What to do? Reynolds: "To help people think differently, you have to disturb the automatic processing. This is best done by challenging the beliefs that caused the frames and surfacing the underlying fears, needs, and desires that are keeping the constructs in place." My other rather extensive experience which change initiatives convinced me that those lead them must take into full account a powerful but unspoken question that most people have: "What's in it for me?"

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