

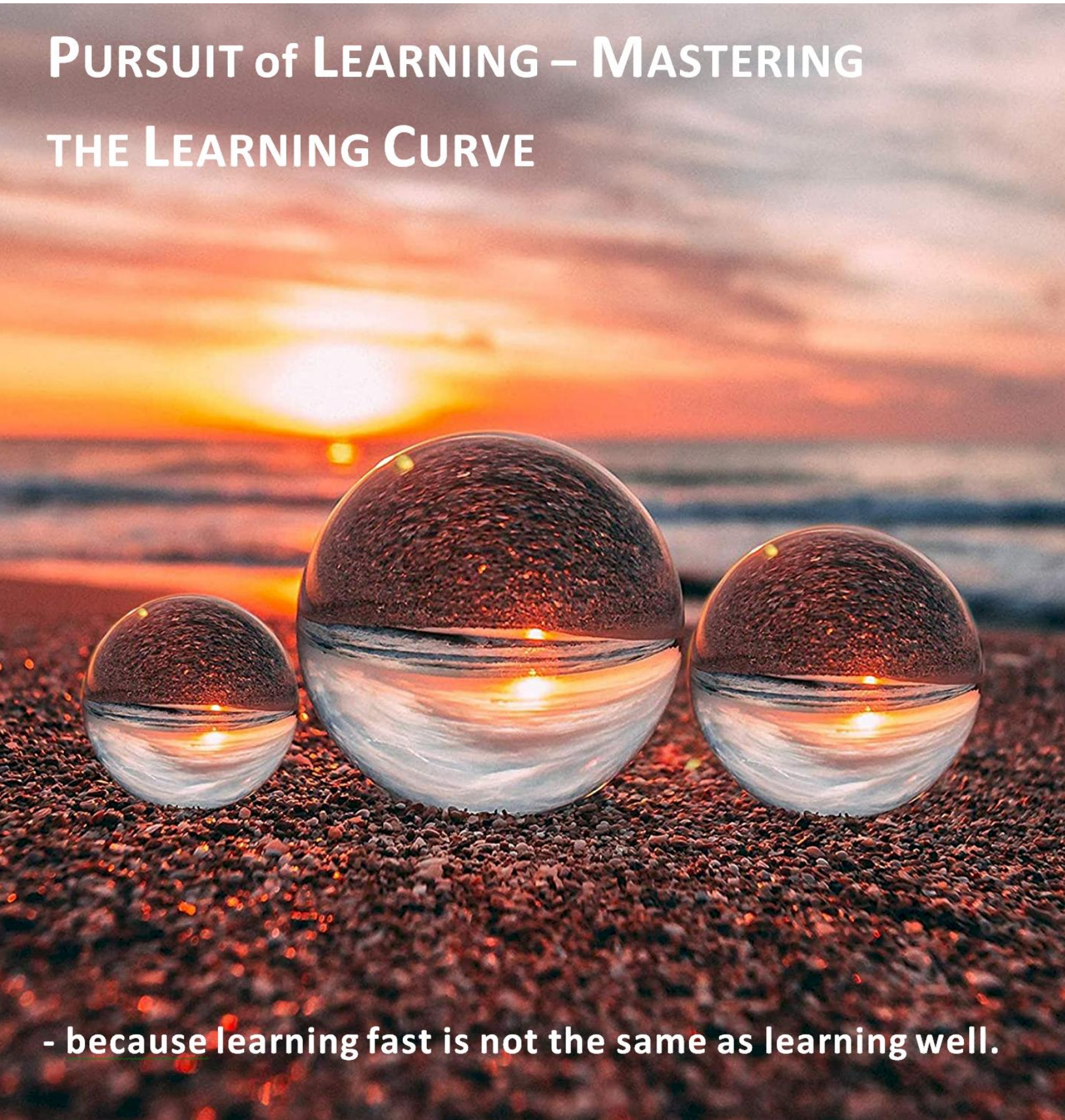


# COWORKING

*by Corin*

A community to help you grow, scale and thrive.

## PURSUIT of LEARNING – MASTERING THE LEARNING CURVE



- because learning fast is not the same as learning well.

## Master the Learning Curve to Learn Well

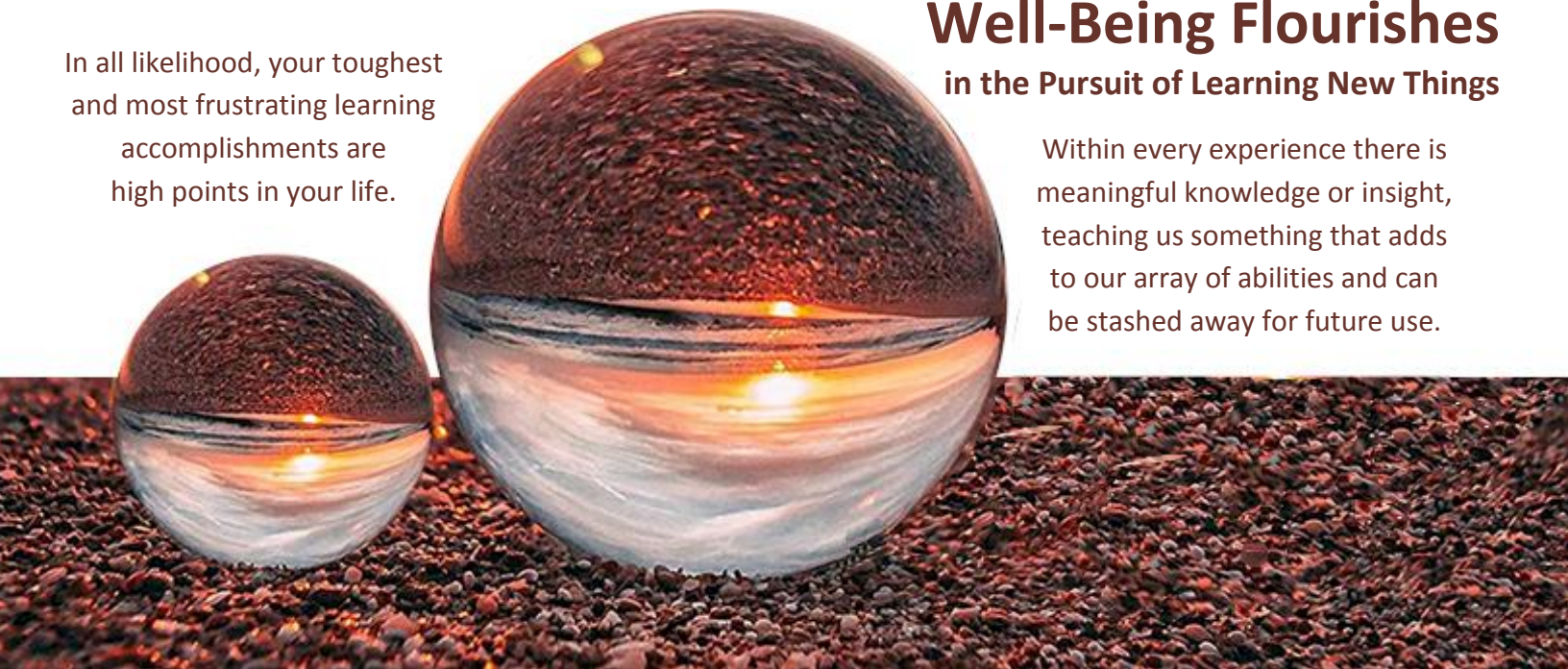
Have you given thought to your pursuit of learning and how essential it is to your resiliency, growth and happiness? Research shows that when a person is intensely engaged in doing and learning new things, well-being flourishes. Education has been widely documented by researchers as the single variable tied most directly to improved health and longevity, too.

Who cannot identify more things to learn? For some people learning new things in pursuit of a passion is an exciting challenge. Thrive as an entrepreneur, master a trade, achieve financial freedom as an artist, or become a world-class photographer. We all have a desire to accomplish some specific task in life.

In all likelihood, your toughest and most frustrating learning accomplishments are high points in your life.

## Well-Being Flourishes in the Pursuit of Learning New Things

Within every experience there is meaningful knowledge or insight, teaching us something that adds to our array of abilities and can be stashed away for future use.



Some knowledge and skills can be acquired in a nice quick process, like learning to boil an egg or send an email. Do you remember when you learned to drive? It was more nerve-wracking and difficult than tying a necktie. Those edgy moments when you pressed the brake too hard or that sense of panic when traffic sped toward you? The times you were unsure of when or how to merge onto a fast-moving freeway. Yet you didn't give up and your confidence and competence increased with practice. Some learning like becoming fluent in a new language or mastering an instrument is simply more challenging and requires time, practice and patience.

Each time you learn something new there is a process that takes place where you go from knowing little or nothing, and over time you discover how to do the task correctly, and with repeated experience you advance to a stage of outright natural competence. Achievements happen when you master the learning curve and learn well.

Have you ever experienced a “learning high”? That moment right after attending an excellent program or seminar, when you feel so excited and so inspired? The moment you accomplish a tricky skill so well the spine-tingling sensation is so exhilarating you want to do it again and again? You know the sense of satisfaction you get from a project that demands your best and you savour the accomplishment and use it for inspiration to face a new challenge.

Many “learning highs” come about because you followed a learning curve to achieve maximum benefit.

We all need more of those types of personally meaningful achievement experiences to bolster our well-being and expand our lives in new directions.

We’ll explore how to do learn well and master the learning curve in this guide.

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## Learning Resistance

For some people the pursuit of learning is foreboding. People shy away from new learning because they feel frustrated, uncomfortable, or incompetent. When learning is difficult, you can tweak learning strategies and hone various skills to boost motivation, commitment, overcome weaknesses, or smooth out performance. But, how do you combat *learning resistance* which is an underlying factor – maybe unknowingly – that can make your approach to learning difficult at the very beginning?

### Learning Resistance Contributes to Difficulty in Learning

Learning resistance is more common than we would like to believe. It causes people to think that the investment of time for practice is laborious, unnecessary or an affront to their character. It is quite disturbing because learning resistance is trending.



It is not uncommon for people to lack the desire to learn new things; they get stuck in a comfort zone.

When an individual lacks confidence in their capacity to learn new or demanding things it is difficult to embark on a new learning journey.

People resist learning when they dread the possibility of making mistakes or failure because they consider it says something negative about their basic abilities.

Some people fear looking weak and instinctively avoid learning anything new that seems to contradict their deeply entrenched, comfortable notions about who they think they are. That is because many of us were taught to forget about our weaknesses, to play to our strengths. We focused on what we knew and became unshakeable authorities and experts at some things.

Some people approach learning with impatience, rushing through steps, missing some, not realizing they are actually making it a more difficult process. There is a vast difference between watching a how-to video or reading how something is done and actually doing it. It may work in one-day certification classes, but using that approach for most learning means that they will not gain the measureable skills needed to build a solid foundation of skills accomplishment that will sustain their work and ambition for the long term. Eventually they will hit a ceiling and find themselves completely out of their depth and floundering.

Learning new skills is difficult for individuals who have a fixed mindset. Because they believe their success is based only on innate ability, they refuse to put in an effort to learn anything new.

## How do you Approach Learning?

If you are a slave to praise or lead a fast-paced life, it is possible that you are not very comfortable with being vulnerable from time to time. Do you feel ill at ease with criticism? Feel foolish for being a novice? Do you find it difficult to admit, "I don't know what you are talking about." As an adult, it can be a tough thing learn a new skill or learn to adopt a new mindset. It can seem like a direct personal attack rather than something enjoyable or gratifying or a promise of something better.

Read these characterizations to determine if you need to reframe your approach to new learning:

- Ben got to a stage in his life where he knew he had the intellectual capacity to quickly grasp concepts and ideas. He mistakenly believed that knowledge about how something is done is equivalent to acquiring the skills and experiential insight. Like others in his department, he read the new material, but unlike them, he put no effort into applying it. With no practical experience he was ill-equipped to face a real life situation with a client. He told us, that by the time he confronted his lack of experience and scrambled to get up to speed, a coworker had to come to his rescue or they would have lost a client. He cited overconfidence in his abilities as the reason for not getting a long-awaited promotion.
- Sarah had always found everything easy at school, in her part-time jobs, and various activities. She expected everything to be easy. When she landed her first administrative job, she found it was more complex than expected. She became unnerved by her first attempts to juggle everything she was required to do. She was ready to give up until her supervisor kindly explained that everyone in that office had at one time been a novice when they first tried something unfamiliar or challenging. "It does not mean we should stop trying or quit. As beginners we all struggle or feel a bit clumsy. We all make mistakes. Those are not failures; they are practice runs."

Fortunately, neither Ben or Sarah gave up. They experienced what it was like to be a novice. They realized they needed concrete experience to apply what they knew before they could achieve competency.

*I've never done this before so I'll be an amateur in the beginning, but I'm a quick study, so I'll be able to pick it up.*

*I'll embrace this new experience and make it enjoyable because it will propel me forward in my career.*

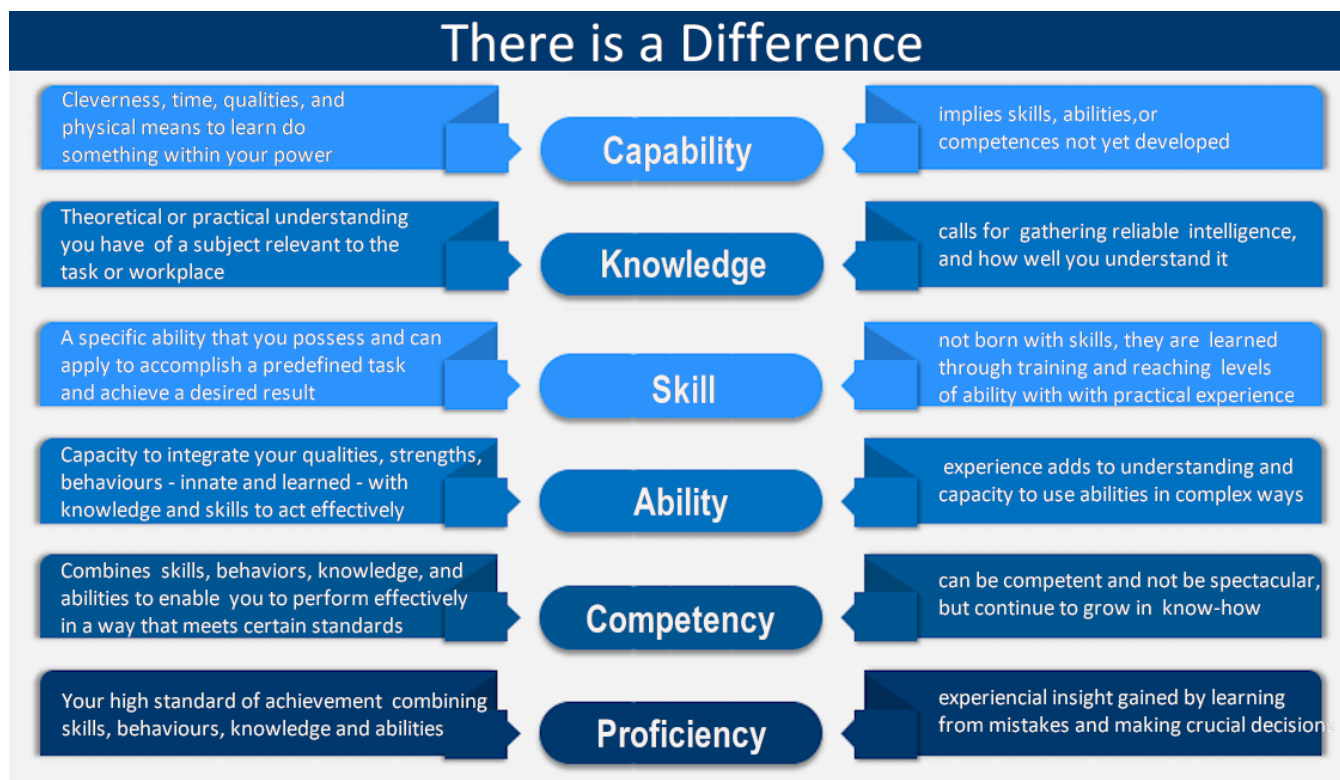


Even when we are adults and skilled or proficient at some things, we can feel ill at ease, exposed or dependent with a new learning situation. Because it has been so ingrained in our psyche that we should play to our strengths, exert independence, and authority, even the thought of admitting we are inexperienced or unqualified causes us to feel vulnerable, even foolish. The key is to understand and accept that being a novice at learning something new is not a weakness. Focus on what's right for you, not what others may think or expect. Trust yourself - trust those feelings that show up pushing you forward and above all accept that you will be a novice at some things and learning can take time.

## Career “Must-Haves” of Knowledge, Skill, and Ability have Different Meanings

Could it be that adults struggle with learning and become discouraged and resistant because we confuse a lack of skills and knowledge with a lack of ability or competence? After all, we use the terms interchangeably which implies that they refer to the same thing. Likely, we do that because they are all “must-haves” in a career.

We tend to think of the differences as subtle when we can get a certificate of achievement from Google for putting in ten hours of study with no practical experience. This can create gaps between our understanding of skills versus abilities and competencies. Because of such interpretations we are not clearly guided to achieve measureable lasting results to further our careers. The definitions are vastly different:



**Capability** implies that you have the cleverness, qualities, time, as well as mental and physical means to learn and do something within your power. Capability implies skills, abilities, or competences that are not yet developed.

- **Knowledge** is the theoretical or practical understanding you have of a subject. How well informed you become depends on other factors, such as how much effort you put into gathering authoritative facts and intelligence, and how well you understand it.
- **Skill** is a specific ability that you possess. You can typically apply that skill in a specific setting in order to accomplish a predefined task and achieve a desired result. You are not born with skills; you learn skills through appropriate training or by practical experience which is the key to how well you improved. You perform each skill at varying levels of expertise, sometimes based on years of experience. It means you have a measurable or quantifiable proficiency to complete a task.

## Career “Must-Haves” continued

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In the workplace, your skills can be easily defined as either a hard skill or soft skill.

Your hard skills are the technical knowledge and training you have acquired to perform tasks that range from mopping a floor, computer programming and coding, playing the piano or using a Microsoft application such as Excel.

Your soft skills encompass how you interact with others or behave in the workplace – listening skills, handling conflict, attention management, problem solving, teamwork to name a few.

- **Ability** means you have the capacity to integrate your various qualities, strengths or behaviours – innate and learned – with your knowledge and skills to act effectively in a job or situation.

You gain more practical knowledge through experience which adds to your level of understanding and capacity to use your abilities in specific or complex ways for superior performance.

- **Competency** is a broader concept that combines your skills, behaviors, knowledge, and abilities to enable you to effectively perform your job in a way that meets certain standards of acceptability. While any competency may include a specific skill, it is more than just your skill alone that meets a standard of competency. You are either competent or incompetent.

A person can have all of the necessary technical skills, but they may not be able to translate those skills into job success. Let’s explore the ability of playing the piano to explain. A person could have attained the necessary knowledge of music and practiced the skills necessary to be technically perfect at playing the piano. However, if that person lacks the confidence and stress tolerance to effectively play in front of an audience, they do not have the competence or fitness to perform.

It is common to hear ability or competency referred to as the how component of completing a task. How do you perform the duties of your job? You can be competent without being spectacular, but continue to grow in your know-how to reach a track record of achievements in a competency.

- **Proficiency** – while competency can refer to the bare minimum required for acceptability, proficiency carries with it a level of mastery that is above the minimum. It is when you achieve a high standard of achievement combining your skills, behaviours, knowledge and abilities to be considered accomplished.

Competency and proficiency are necessary steps to rise upward on a learning curve to master a skill and gain practical wisdom. Experiential insight and wisdom come from doing something repeatedly, learning from your mistakes and making critical decisions. We like doctors who have practical wisdom.

Not everyone wants to master every skill; that is okay, too.



## The Rush to “Tick Off” Accomplishments

Today, there seems to be a rush to learn things quickly – to ‘tick off’ accomplishments. We think highly of people who have distinguished themselves and want to emulate their accomplishments. It sounds easy until you analyze their background education and experience and the years of sustained effort devoted to building various aspects of their careers before making the cover of Time or Newsweek. The grueling work is intimidating, especially now when there are so many opportunities to do the work you love.

It’s great to be ambitious. However, one must also be pragmatic about how much time, practice, sometimes painful experience, and of course patience it takes to go through the stages of becoming even competent, let alone a master in your field of endeavour. For example: say you register for an online photography course. You read about the processes and watch videos on how something is done. The instructor provides practice exercises, but instead of going out with your camera and actually taking photographs, you take the easy road. You examine the instructor’s examples and read his analysis of what constitutes good photography versus inferior work. You declare you have learned the lesson and skip to the next lesson and the next. After skipping through the entire course you claim you have everything covered. You may get a certificate because you have the right answers, but can you really say you learned any skills or became a competent photographer?



### The Perils of Taking Short-Cuts

In anything you learn, skipping to the answers or defaulting to Google for solutions provides a temporary jolt of satisfaction because you avoid the time and struggle required of doing it on your own. However, it prevents you from using your brain for critical thinking which is what you need most for real learning. Avoiding the trial and error of practical experience deprives you of the real work required for building a solid foundation, upon which you can rely, and is essential for true achievement. If you assume that taking a short cut is the right answer to everything, what will happen when you rely on into information that is outdated, inaccurate or worse yet deceptive? Taking short-cuts just to tick off an accomplishment is an illusion of competence. It certainly does not make you the expert that people will seek out.

Taking a mentally lazy approach is superficial and unsatisfying. When you rely on too much on the short-cuts it can prevent you from grappling with questions that don’t have a simple answer and deprive your life of intellectual richness. In other words it can make you mentally weak.

*The Rush to “Tick Off” Accomplishments continued*

It might be easy to attach an impressive sounding title to your credentials. But, sooner or later a spurious title without valid practice or experience exposes you to risk. Putting ineffective skills into practice too soon can result in a shoddy performance and give clients a poor impression of your effectiveness or the quality of your work. You can find yourself completely out of your depth or making a grievous error, which can unduly affect a client and be detrimental to your reputation. It is not your image that makes you credible or effective it what you do and how you do it.

We do not seek out experts with average ability. We seek out those that shine. Those equipped with the skills and experiences that came from sustained effort and years of practice. In other words they learned well, not necessarily fast. We need their expertise because we do not have the necessary answers or skills. They do! They have the expertise know how to do the hard stuff that we dare not even attempt to do. They earned our trust. We respect their dedication and mental strengths. Therefore, if you wish to emulate a professional or artisan you admire, emulate their enthusiasm, persistence, patience and dedication to achieving their mastery. You have to be prepared and dedicated to learn well. Learning well leads to true accomplishment.



**The Satisfaction of Learning Well**

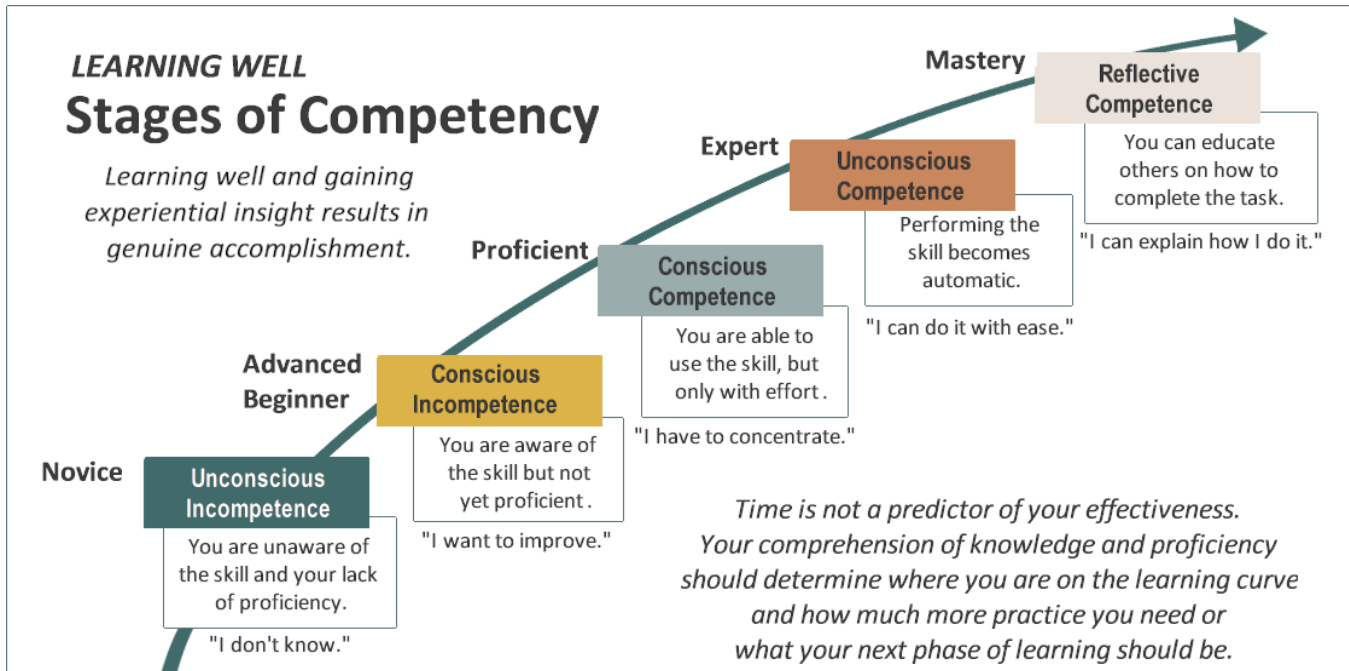
There is enormous satisfaction that comes from learning well. If you were to single out two or three of the most memorable or gratifying of your learning experiences, in all likelihood the ones that have the most intrinsic value are not only the tough ones – and some of the most frustrating, too – they are high points in your life. When something went wrong you learned how to avoid it happening again and when a thing worked well you figured out how to repeat it. When you reflect on those key experiences you probably recognize the different phases of learning you experienced – from being a novice just starting to understand a new concept or skill to when you realized that performing the skill was like second nature to you. That’s the learning curve or stages of achieving competency. Sure there were exasperating parts, but many of those you may now view as fun times, too.

That kind of fulfillment is invigorating. Learning transforms our lives! That is because we are hard-wired for experiential learning; it is an important part of human architecture that the human brain continues to adapt and functions best in response to new learning experiences. You may not realize it but one of your best attributes is your innate ability to learn through experience and integrate those ideas into the framework of your previous knowledge and experience for further reflection and use.

If you want to be classified as a clever expert and distinguish yourself in your field, we ask you to choose to learn well so that you can rightfully tick it off every learning experience as a genuine accomplishment.

## Learning Well - Stages of Competency

It takes time, attention and sustained effort to go through the learning process. Learning well requires progress along the learning curve at a pace that allows you build a solid foundation and gain the relevant skills that will prove useful and reliable. Learning well means you give each phase of learning your full attention.



People who expect instant success do not grasp that **we are all novices in the beginning** and that it takes time to truly absorb knowledge and integrate it with what is already known. Whatever your chosen field of endeavour you must be careful not to progress so quickly in your learning that you lack full understanding or miss important concepts that are critical to building a solid foundation that you can rely on.

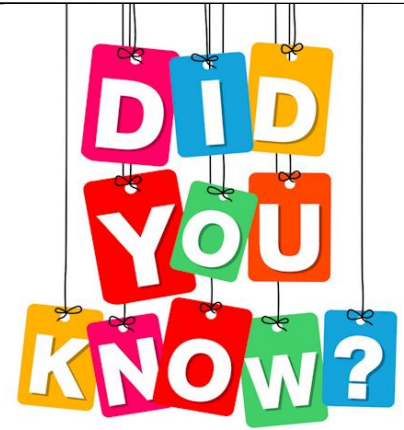
As a beginner you gain knowledge and experience you move up the learning curve to the next stage of learning to reach the initial levels of awareness and achieve basic competence.

With specific knowledge and measurable skills you gain the proficiency to understand and do something correctly. It takes time and considerable effort to rehearse a skill and use it in various real life situations so that you can work toward achieving experiential insight and self-sufficiency. Without experiential insight you will miss the most important element of any learning journey that leads to expertise and mastery.

There are five distinct stages of competency that everyone goes through. Let's explore them.

**1. Unconscious Incompetence – state of ignorance - novice**

Unconscious incompetence is where we all begin on our learning journey. At this stage, it is simply impossible for us to grasp the scope of what we do not know. We are that incompetent, we do not even know it. You may not remember when you were a child and saw your dad driving. It looked so simple. All you had to do was turn the wheel. You brimmed with confidence and equipped to drive. You were unconsciously incompetent and did not know the extent of how much there was to learn. It takes competency to identify competency! So, your parents did not let you drive.



It happens as adults too where our know-how is invisible. We greatly overestimate our competence or may even deny the usefulness of a skill. We are unable to recognize the deficit because we simply do not understand or know how to do something. A perfect example is the arm-chair coach who thinks he knows better than the coaches and athletes he sees on TV who dedicate their lives to mastering a sport.

In stage one we must transition from unawareness to recognizing our own incompetence and the value of acquiring new knowledge or a skills before moving on to the next stage.

**2. Conscious incompetence – state of awareness – advancing as a beginner**

At the conscious incompetence stage, we are the new learners who become aware of their own inabilities. We encounter a new situation where the deficit in our know-how becomes visible.

Let’s imagine what this might be like for someone going to a martial arts class for the first time. Jennifer has seen it on TV and she’s confident she can do it and that she will be a black or red belt champion in no time. At the first training session this is what happens. She struggles to breathe and has difficulty with the movements and transitions. Another student lands multiple body shots on Jennifer, who has never been hit before. It’s more painful than she expected.

Jennifer is now consciously aware about what she does not know. Initially she may feel frustration. Jennifer was full of confidence when she entered the class, but after the first sessions her confidence may have taken a dive. She may feel weak, unfit, or stupid. She may even feel she made a mistake and wish she had never started. Those initial feelings can be motivating because she recognizes the value of a new skill and wants to improve. So, she will find a way to come to grips with her incompetence and prepare herself for the learning journey ahead to achieve the level of skill development she desires.

This is a normal phase where we become aware of how much we need to learn as well as the value of addressing the deficit because of the worth of the goal. We have to be kind to ourselves and accept that being a novice is normal and okay. We cannot expect to achieve some level of competence without being a beginner first. In this phase of the journey we take a conscious step to the next stage.

### **3. Conscious competence – actual learning –proficiency, practical applications**

By being resilient, getting back up and working on her skills, Jennifer reached the next stage, conscious competence. This is where she became fully aware of what she knows and the skills that will enable her to be competent at the tasks she performs.

Through learning we become aware of our actions as we do them. Things finally start to click. We mindfully and methodically work through the steps and make a conscious effort to perform each part of the process. We may make mistakes along the way but they are integral to the learning process. Finally, after considerable experience, we celebrate the moment we have finally done it and the hard work that led to that moment.

We have “know-how” acquired through experience and now our competence becomes visible.

At this stage, we can execute our know-how, but still have to concentrate on what we are doing. We practice and improve. We are self-conscious of our actions and need to be careful. Remember when you took your driver’s test. You demonstrated the right skills to pass, but you were extremely conscious of the person sitting next to you evaluating every move you made. The day you got your license you were still consciously competent and embarking on your stage toward being an accomplished driver.

In this phase of learning we might not be able to “tick it off” as an accomplishment and move onto something new to learn, but we do recognize the progress we are making toward mastery.



### **4. Unconscious competence – achievement of expertise, self-sufficiency**

The penultimate stage in any learning journey is unconscious competence. This is where we have had so much practice it can be performed easily and we do not need much. We know what needs to be done and can act independently and quickly. We can offer support to others without giving it much thought.

Here, Jennifer became so skilled she felt the execution of her skills happened in autopilot. We perform many tasks where they feel so natural we really do not think about what we are doing. Now you can drive a car and do not think about the laws or details in the learner’s manual, where to place your hands on the steering wheel or the degree in which to turn the wheel. Your actions due to road signs, traffic lights, and crossings are instantaneous.

At face value this sounds like a great state to be in and naturally it does have its advantages. Yet, it actually comes with a new set of risks: overconfidence and complacency where we try to perform while executing another task, where mistakes get made or bad habits may get reinforced. We do not reflect on the progress of our accomplishment and may stop seeking efficiency or improvement. We may not be empathetic to those going through the early stages of learning because we have forgotten what we went through in pursuing our learning curve and don’t understand why others are having difficulty.

We discover that potentially the best way to be consistently good and attentive is not be complacent and also that there was a lot of value in being in stage three where we were more conscious of what we were doing.

**5. Reflective Competence – evolving mastery – ability to teach competency**

The best way to be consistently good and attentive to our skill is to be the consciously competent. To take a step into the previous stage of learning is not always easy when our proficiency is so visibly evident and we have already invested a lot of resources and effort to become the knowledgeable and skilled expert in our field of endeavour.



The fifth stage of learning is reflective competence where we actually gain insight into our abilities and can envision or create real expertise and mastery. What does that mean?

It means thinking about how and what we do to accomplish our tasks so that we can identify errors and areas of improvement as well as focus on the most efficient and effective parts of our processes. We ask ourselves questions. By reflecting on the right actions we reinforce our skills and behaviours and also train our brains.

It means letting knowledge and skills evolve. To be truly effective we have to learn how to amalgamate our new knowledge and skill with other core competencies so we can perform at more complex levels of efficiency. We keep assimilating and adapting, and reflecting on our competence and what it can mean or achieve. Reflective learning can create “eureka” moments where we have sudden inspiration, insight, recognition, and such deep understanding we can connect what we know and can do to different situations.

Noticing incompetence in others is regarded as one of the key skills linked with reflective competence. It is our opportunity to rate the competency of others, identify where they are on their learning curve and effectively encourage and guide them through it. As much as we may think we know about a subject or skill, it is only when we teach or train others that our understanding reaches new depths.

In between stage one and two we were excited and didn’t need much encouragement to try and improve. We may have even bragged about our competence. When we experience reflective competence we find satisfaction and joy in seeing others benefit from our learning and experience and the support we can offer.

## Key Elements in the Pursuit of Learning

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How can you get excited about the pursuit of learning? The answers lie in four key elements:

- Adopting a Growth Mindset
- Stepping out of the Comfort Zone
- Enhancing Curiosity
- Understanding the Learning Curve

Though, we will explore these four elements in more detail and give you some valuable exercises to augment your abilities to master the learning curve, here is a brief outline of these four elements.

### 1) Adopting a Growth Mindset

A growth mindset teaches you to be fascinated by emerging challenges, to be curious and willing to put in the effort to keep on learning. When you have a growth mindset you believe that you can do hard things and that your basic qualities, attitudes, intelligence and abilities are things you continue to cultivate through learning, application, and experience.

### 2) Stepping out of the all too Familiar Comfort Zone

A comfort zone is a neutral behavioral state where you perceive you are in control of your environment and you can operate, experiencing low levels of vulnerability, danger, stress, anxiety or fear. In the comfort zone everything seems manageable so you float along doing what you always do, in a cocoon of fabricated safety. But, you do not realize that all around you change is inevitable and that stepping outside of the comfort zone is key to discovering more meaning in life, following your passions, accomplishing your goals, and finding authentic happiness.

### 3) Enhancing Curiosity

Curiosity is your desire to know or learn for the sake of knowing and to be fascinated with new information and experiences. Curiosity precedes your learning and is the driving force behind your search for information and innovation. It is at the heart of human endeavour and keeps leading mankind down new paths to countless wonders. High levels of curiosity activate areas of your brain that are involved with other cognitive processes and benefits. Research shows that consistent levels of curiosity are elemental to your well-being and life satisfaction. When you exercise consistent elevated levels of curiosity you tend to ask smarter questions, solve problems, avoid thinking that leads to faulty decision-making, and inspire others.

Albert Einstein said, "I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious." That is intrinsic motivation – simply enjoying the opportunity to explore and seek answers to questions.

#### 4) Understanding the Learning Curve

Learning is a process that follows a learning curve. It applies to everything you learn or want to change in your life. There is a time element associated with progressing through any learning curve. You simply cannot rush through the process. Learning a new skill begins with small steps and practice. You begin as a novice and need time to gain a level of competence through rehearsal, repetition, and real life experience. Learning well requires you to progress up the learning curve at a pace that allows you to give each phase your full attention to gain the specific knowledge, measurable experiential skills, and self-sufficiency needed for a solid foundation for advancement.



*The these two bird houses illustrate the difference between basic learning and experiential learning.*

If you have ever experienced the spine-tingling sensation of a “learning high” you know what it means to face the learning curve. You know the sense of satisfaction you got from a challenge that demanded your best. Use that for inspiration whenever you have something new to learn.



## Adopt a Growth Mindset

Have you heard this story shared by Shawn Achor in his TEDx talk, “The Happy Secret to Better Work”?

“A little girl falls from her bunk bed and lands hard on the floor. She might have broken her leg, and she’s in tremendous pain. As she is about to cry, her quick-thinking older brother tells her that no human could possibly have landed the way that she did when she hit the floor, and that can only mean one thing: she’s a unicorn.

Rather than giving in to the pain, the little girl’s brain begins to process the concept that she might actually be a baby unicorn...”

This story is an example of how re-framing your circumstances can allow you to achieve a positive happier mindset.

What is Mindset? Mindset is the established set of attitudes that adults tend to cling to. Basically there are two kinds of mind-sets: growth mindset and fixed mindset.

### Characteristics of a Fixed Mindset

With a “fixed mindset” you would assume that your character, attitudes, and behaviours are prearranged and carved in stone; that you cannot change qualities, intelligence, relationships, or creative ability in any given way. A negative or fixed mindset can sully how you view the world.

- People with a fixed mindset resist change. They take the path of least resistance within the boundaries of their comfort zone. When they resist learning or change their fear zone expands and takes over their growth zone.
- People with a fixed mindset end up feeling constricted and stifled – basically frustrated – because it is contrary to their natural tendencies or hard-wired need to flourish authentically. They end up putting their energies into things that do not make them thrive.
- People with a fixed mindset tend to be less curious, less inclined to learning new things, and less open to new experiences. Lack of curiosity combined with the previous two tendencies results in a person rigidly adhering to time-worn routines and opinions. When they stop asking questions or being interested in life, it negatively affects their mental health and vigor.

People with a fixed mindset tend to shun learning new ideas that conflict with their long-standing thinking that they are most comfortable believing. They judge the old notions to be part of their individual identity.



### **Attributes of a Growth Mindset**

On the other hand, a growth mindset teaches you to be fascinated by emerging challenges, to be curious and willing to put in the effort to keep on learning believing you can do hard things and that basic qualities, attitudes, intelligence and abilities are things you can continue to cultivate through learning, application, and experience. With a growth mindset you believe you can get smarter, better, or more skilled at something through sustained effort – which is exactly what neuroplasticity tells us on a broad level.

### **Neuroplasticity Provides Proof**

Neuroplasticity refers to your brain’s ongoing ability to adapt and develop.

Neuroplasticity provides scientific proof that your intelligence is not fixed, it develops throughout your life. You make new connections and pathways on a daily basis as you adapt to new circumstances. When you learn something new, you change and expand how the circuits in your brain are wired. These are physiological changes. The extent to which you can expand your minds and abilities is unknown. Every limit you thought you might have can be exceeded time and time again.

### **Acquiring a Growth Mindset**

For more than two decades Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck has studied mind-set and the power of mankind’s beliefs. She set out to prove that intelligence and personality can be developed rather than being immutably engrained traits. Her research has shown how changing even the simplest of beliefs can have profound impact on nearly every aspect of a person’s life. She states that a growth mindset creates a passion for learning.

“Stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it’s not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset. This is the mindset that allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives.”

With a growth mindset you are willing to ditch arrogance or any hint of an “I-know-it-all” attitude and step out of your comfort zone to embrace the unfamiliar, live for a little while with uncertainty or not knowing. The growth mindset you employ for learning a skill applies to any changes you want to make in behaviour, attitude, or pattern. These changes include enhance character strengths or positive emotions, or learning to be more self-aware or mindful.



## 7 Ways to Control your Mindset

There are many reasons why you may not achieve what you set out to do. Life has twists and turns, external forces, circumstances, physiological influences, the people (and distractions) you meet along the way. Many of those may be beyond your control. However, you can control how you think about these twists and turns – you can control your mindset.

### 1) **Emphasize growth over speed:**

Learning fast isn't the same as learning well, and learning well sometimes requires allowing time for practice and even learning from the missteps you may make in the process.

### 2) **Replace negative self-talk with growth related words:**

Instead of using the words “failing” or “mistake” replace them with words like learning, brain training, growth, improvement, judgment adjustment, or brain fart (why not laugh a little, at the same time). Add the magic word **yet** to the end of negative statements that include phrases that suggest impossibilities, such as “I can't”. I cannot build a website by myself, yet. I have not learned to skydive, yet. I haven't master the art of public speaking, yet.

### 3) **Think of stress as a provider of energy:**

Physiologically, there's no difference between anxiety and excitement. Both involve a 'stress response.' It is how you perceived or label it as positive or negative that matters. Our society tends to perceive stress as negative. But, not all stress is harmful. Stress provides energy that you need to work under pressure, go on a first date, get through a speech, or step out of your comfort zone.

### 4) **Boost your brain power:**

Learn more about your brain and how it works and grows. Care for your brain much the same way that you might work out in the gym to keep your body fit or take your vehicle in for a tune-up. Keeping your body healthy, nourished and exercised is important in keeping your brain mentally alert and fit, prepared for amazing feats of learning, discovery – being smart. Through calisthenics for the mind, you challenge your brain in unexpected ways, and utilize all your senses to stretch the boundaries of learning and experience.

### 5) **Work with your body's natural ebbs and flows:**

Your body's energy has its own path. You are naturally more energetic and motivated at specific times of the day. Work with it.

### 6) **Choose the right role models:**

Take inspiration from leaders and innovators. Surround yourself with people who are smart, genuine, diverse, give you good feedback, have fascinating conversations.

### 7) **Focus on learning:**

Age should not alter your enthusiasm for learning, and it is never too late to awaken another part of your mind to develop any of your best strengths and boost any of the many strengths that have been underdeveloped to better align your abilities.

## The All too Familiar Comfort Zone

While in her last year of college, Leona, lingered in disappointment because she did not achieve a dream she had held onto for quite awhile. At first, she refused, or was unable, to explore the twists and turns of her life. She got bogged down with negative feelings and the idea that life isn't fair. Then one day she asked herself why she was not able to adapt to her new situation. After all she knew she was smart. Two curious insights came to Leona. First, she discovered that the ambition she brooded over was no longer suited to the person she had become. Second, all the expertise she had acquired was going to be "super useful" going forward. Leona looked inward and decided to step out of her comfort zone.



### It Takes no Talent to Grow Old in Your Comfort Zone

The comfort zone is based on memories of things we know and know how to do. We all gravitate back to what we know, but none of us limit ourselves to that zone. Well at least we didn't as children. Most adults we know today are able to talk, read, drive a car, or boil water on the stove. They do not have to crawl to the supermarket or boardroom. They may have no clear memory of the first time they were home alone, sat on a toboggan overlooking a steep hill or jumped off a diving board. There was a first time for every one of those experiences and many of them required that person to step out of a comfortable zone. Every time we venture out to learn and experience new things the growth zones expand and the zone of fear narrows toward being just a sliver.

Children are naturally willing and excited to push out of their comfort zones. It really makes no sense that as an adult a person should want to remain in some comfort zone on a permanent basis. It takes no talent or ability to grow old there. What chain holds adults there? One answer is that we get stuck because of a fixed mindset. We fail to realize that every endeavor we undertake that brings us pleasure is the result of stepping outside a comfort zone. Another reason is that routines make us lazy.

Why settle for less? Get left behind? Twenty years from now be disappointed by the things you didn't do? We have to be out of our comfort zones to be curious, learn new skills, enhance character strengths, positive emotions, and personal connections or experience achievement and a life of learning and meaning.

*I know there are two options:  
step forward into growth or  
step back into the comfort zone.  
But, How does one start?*



## 5 Steps to Resume Command of the Comfort Zone

To open gateways to expand your life in new directions take charge of these five potential issues:

### 1) Understand what is inside your comfort zone:

Draw a circle on a piece of paper. Everything you are experiencing in your life right now is within the confines of that circle: your friendships, job, level of education, financial state, style of parenting, leisure activities, emotions, current state of fitness or health – everything in your life. That circle defines your comfort zone. Outside that circle is everything you desire in your life (tangible and intangible), but do not currently have or enjoy. You want them in your circle. But the only way to obtain or achieve the things you desire is to step outside your comfort zone to do something new or different.

### 2) Ensure that self-talk is not sabotaging your efforts?

Have you ever thought that you may have grown so familiar with your feelings, physical sensations, reactions, habits, behaviors, and thoughts that you do not notice how your self-talk can incapacitate your efforts, keeping you locked in some corner of your comfort zone? Your assessment of yourself may be so short-lived it pushes you to stagnate in self-deception. Is it possible that you dismiss insights into your shortcomings because you tend to listen only to people who affirm your view of yourself? Self-deception diminishes appetite for learning to be more effective in whatever you do. Start by accepting that you may have a bias or flawed perspective. Make room in your mind for objectivity. Slow down your thoughts and reactions to pay attention to how you talk to yourself about yourself, and then ask yourself questions about the validity of that self-talk.

### 3) Do not let change define you:

Your attitude toward life is affected by your ability to embrace change. If change happens to you, rather than you influencing that change, you are much more likely to feel like you are being dragged through life. Embrace change with a calm and relaxed mind. Know where you are going and what you are setting out to accomplish. The clearer you picture these changes, the more motivated you will be to step out of your comfort zone.

### 4. Routines drain you of energy:

Patterns are confining. Once you have identified your comfort zone, find ways to challenge the boundaries of it. Start with baby steps. Expose yourself to new environments that are just outside your comfort zone. Do everyday things differently. Take in your surroundings while you walk from one place to another, eat without distractions such turning off the television and smart phone, travel a new route to work, check out a new place to eat, sit in a different location to read, get away from social media, brush your teeth with the opposite hand. Whatever works best for you as long as it is something that is different and makes you feel bold or vitalized.

### 5. Take time to think things through properly before making decisions.

Consider all your options. Don't rule anything out, no matter how impossible it seems. When thinking about the options that seem impossible, view them from different angles to consider what it would look like if it was possible. How would it have changed to be possible?

## Stretch Out to Find Your Performance Zone



### Stretch a Skill Set and Move Forward

When was the last time you learned something new or interesting? Do you shy away from new learning because you feel frustrated? Uncomfortable? Incompetent? This can happen when you rely on a dominant learning pattern and, to some extent unknowingly, neglect to enhance other abilities that would make it easier for you to stretch beyond your comfort zone.

You can change this pattern by expanding one aspect of how you learn. It could be improving just one skill or allowing yourself to be exposed to a more diverse learning environment.

### 6 Exercises to Propel you Forward

See how good it feels when you step out of your comfort zone to accomplish something meaningful to you. Here are some exercises you can use to stretch out of your comfort zone:

- 1) Have a difficult conversation face to face instead of email/text/phone.
- 2) Research an argument from a different point of view. It does not mean you will necessarily be in agreement, but you will learn more and gain a different perspective and insight.
- 3) Make a list of two to three things that scare you. Choose a week to take action on one of your fears. You have no fears, you say? Let's look at four instances of fear that many people do not consider as such. The first is fear of appearing selfish. How many times have you decided to sacrifice your needs because you did not want to appear selfish, fearing how others might perceive you? The second one is fear of being decisive or "saying no". Ask yourself, when was the last time you said "no" to people when you did not want to do something they asked of you. The fourth is "fear of not being perfect. How many times in your life did you avoid participating in an activity because you might feel embarrassed, vulnerable, or look awkward.
- 4) Join a club or do volunteer work. To start, choose something in your community or within a realm of interest. As you gain more confidence, expose yourself to different opportunities or take a leadership role.
- 5) Free yourself of all your techie gadgets for one full day, once per week.
- 6) Find a new hobby that requires physical movement.

## Curiosity Precedes Learning

As children you were naturally curious, probably asking, in one day, ten times the questions an adult asks in a week. Through curiosity you probably had many important moments in your life. Yet in adulthood, if you are like most people, you may be taking curiosity for granted, or maybe you have not thought about nurturing it as a strategic tool. Why?

We live in a society where curiosity is often not encouraged. We are vulnerable to automation. Many people have been programmed to think like machines and work with technology made to replicate the minds of *incurious* adults. At school you may have been fortunate, but generally speaking, our educational practices do not always nurture a learning mind. Teachers prepare students to think robotically by acquiring knowledge to answer questions and pass a test. You may have worked in an organization that discouraged inquisitiveness by resisting new ideas or novel questions; leadership expected you to fulfill a specific role and stick to the procedures. Today, how many people do you know that rely on spoon-fed answers from Alexa?

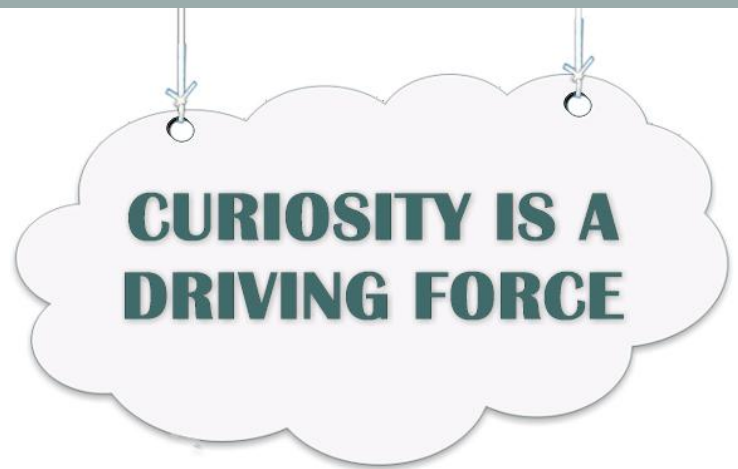
Father of computer science and artificial intelligence, Alan Turing said, “Instead of trying to produce a program to simulate the adult mind, why not rather try to produce one which simulates the child’s?” That did not happen! Now we treasure “knowing”, not the experience of learning. In this “one click away” machine-driven world where there is an unlimited availability of information, it takes a hungry mind to explore it, expand it, and use it.

### Curiosity can be Learned and Fine-Tuned

Your curiosity precedes learning; it is the driving force behind your search for information and innovation. It is deeply associated with your motivation, engagement and agility.

Studies show that without curiosity even the most in demand soft skills are the most elusive. Fortunately, more and more experts are realizing curiosity is a skill rather a natural trait which leads more parents, educators, and organizations to encourage students and adults to become more curious and emphasize using that skill every day, because curiosity is like a muscle that withers when not used.

It does not require a genius mind to be curious. More importantly, curiosity can be learned and fine-tuned. When your brain is curious, it generates dopamine, triggering the learning that occurs. That’s what happens with the stimulated mind of a child. Curiosity separates you from the robots, which is even more critical as artificial intelligence becomes more prevalent in our lives. We humans can be creative, innovative or intellectually curious; robots cannot. It is worth it for you to carve out time each week to boost your individual curiosity. Like any skill enhancement exercise, what starts as a step-by-step list, after some time, transforms into a natural part of daily life. Your curiosity will become instinctual.



## 5 Exercises to Spark your Curiosity

### 1) Learn to think like a toddler:

Question everything. Identify the gaps in your knowledge? There is a bottomless pit of fascinating possibilities. What do you know about wolves? Are bats really blind? How do I make my own paper? Press flowers? Can I see ice from the last ice age? Where? What are the masterpieces of world literature? Can I be a backyard meteorologist? When you find an answer ask even more questions about that topic.

### 2) Reflect on how you engaged with the world:

Reflecting on the last seven days, how many of the things below are true for you?

- I got so absorbed in learning something new that I lost track of time.
- I talked to someone who gave me a new idea or changed my mind on something.
- I took the initiative to learn more about one of my interests.
- I didn't know the answer to a question, and this didn't allow me to rest until I figured it out.
- I explored a completely new idea or topic—just for the fun of it.
- I took the initiative to talk to a new person, just to discover what she was thinking



### 3) Learn to ask better questions:

The skill of curiosity and questioning go together. To develop the skill of curiosity, we have to question why things are the way they are or why a person may do something a certain way.

- Ask yourself tough questions such as, “Why do I believe that?” or “Why do I think my way? What would happen next if I tried \_\_\_\_\_?”
- Learn to be fascinated by the person you are with. Be comfortable with silence while allowing a person to respond to a question, then listen intently and effectively.

### 4) Embark on a “curious excursion”:

You don't have to go far. It is best if you go someplace new. You could choose a museum if that interests you, but you can bolster curiosity exploring a hardware store or tree nursery.

### 5) Learn something new that excites you:

We all have random interests that we never act on. Pick one and pursue it.



## Be Realistic about the Learning Curve

It is important to be realistic about the amount of time it takes to learn complex subject matter, measurable skills, and the ability to integrate new knowledge and skills with other core competencies in useful ways. The learning curve, right, is a visual representation of that learning process. Think of it as a beginner's step-by-step climb to mastery.

Whether you learn the skills of riding a motorcycle, astute investing, cooking, or building an Android app, an investment of time is required to progress from novice to expert. Even experts invest more time and effort to become masters or the authorities that contribute to the practical wisdom in their field.

### Rushing the Learning Process is Detrimental



Learning takes time and time is a rare asset, which provokes people to rush the process – jump strait from beginner to expert. In a business environment where change is rapid, you may want to blast through course material or short-circuit practice sessions because you feel constrained by time and resources. Rushing through the learning process is not an effective strategy. In fact, it makes learning more difficult:

- When you push too hard or charge through the steps, your brain does not work efficiently, which means you miss important stuff or forget more than sixty percent of what you learned that day, which creates learning hurdles in the next sessions.
- Insufficient training can result in you developing poor habits, practicing a skill incorrectly, or missing important steps or the subtleties that are useful in real life situations.
- Rushing causes you to ignore or stifle the critical feedback or insights you need to improve technique and efficiency. Feedback is an opportunity to learn what books and videos cannot teach.
- Insufficient rehearsal or training does not allow you to achieve the proficiency you initially desired. Putting ineffective skills into practice too soon can result in a shoddy performance and give clients a poor impression of your effectiveness or the quality of your work.
- Rushing makes learning extremely challenging – nearly unachievable – to develop the more complex knowledge and skills needed to reach higher levels on the learning curve.

Do not make practice and after-thought. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Yet, all methods stress the importance of setting aside time to reinforce learning, and to put new knowledge and skill into practice. You cannot expect to become proficient or achieve good or expert results before you invest sufficient time into applying what you learn to achieve experiential insight and competency?

## Knowledge and Practical Use

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Remember when there was a big test and you would pull an all-nighter, cramming facts just to pass it? Even if you nailed the test, chances are you didn't remember half of what you studied a week later, let alone today. Cramming might work in an academic environment where your sole purpose might just be to pass an exam. However, it gets tricky when you are trying to learn a skill, because you cannot cram a skill; it takes time to perfect the intricacies of whatever skill you want to learn, be it a sport, playing a musical instrument, riding a motorcycle or enhancing your communication skills.

### Practicing a New Skill in Real Life Situations is Necessary

Practice is necessary. You cannot advance up the learning curve from novice to competency in any ability without utilizing the knowledge and skills in useful ways. Even if you remember it all, reading all the right books on a subject makes you knowledgeable. Owning the best tools increases your material possessions. It is practice that differentiates a beginner from an expert.

- No matter how much you think you know about a subject, your level of understanding rises to a new level when you are able to put that knowledge to the test in practical circumstances.
- You develop skills through doing. You develop mastery through repeated practice to become proficient at a pace and intensity conducive to complex real life situations.

Creating actual works of art propels an artist's experience and career. Watchmakers and mechanics become capable from taking watches and engines apart and putting them back together to run accurately or smoothly. Would you consult or trust a certified technician or professional (dentist, hairdresser) who had no practical experience in their field of expertise?

- Evidence based practice in real-life conditions gives you the experience to know you are making the right decisions.
- You need to execute skills with an expert to determine if you are learning a skill correctly or using bad habits or poor form.
- Deliberate practice, involving attention, rehearsal and repetition, leads to new valuable knowledge or skills that can later be developed into more complex knowledge and skills.

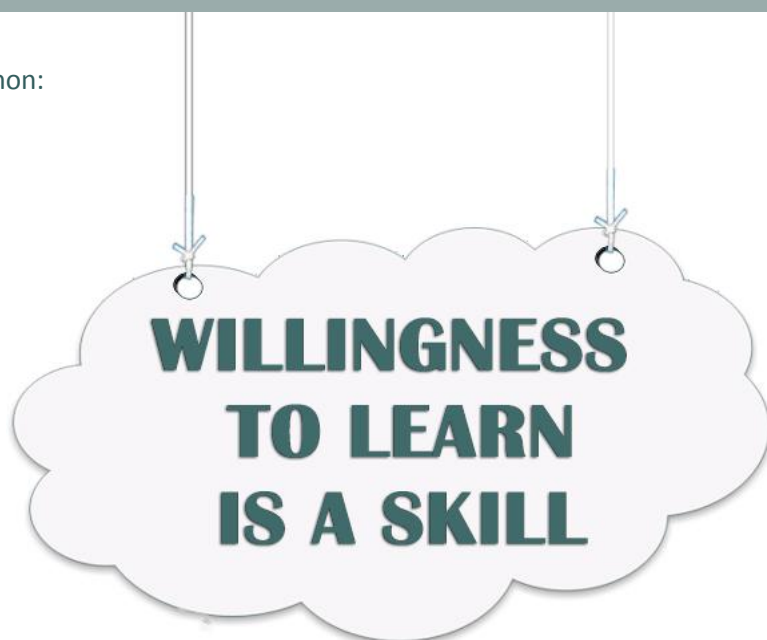
Never ignore the value of experiencing each stage of the learning process. It is the only way to gain the proficiency needed to the best that you can be at whatever you choose to do.

## 4 Key Strengths Needed to Master the Learning Curve

Effective learners have these four strengths in common: willingness to learn, curiosity, self-awareness, and ability to manage their inner dialogue.

### 1. Willingness to Learn

All learning begins with your willingness to learn. Willingness is an important skill in itself. It is a competency, like reading and writing. Willingness is your spirit and desire, cheerful consent, and readiness to know new things and improve. From both a personal and business perspective you should want to improve professional skills or keep up to date with changes or new technologies in your field of expertise.



“We tend to associate personal growth with determination, persistence, and hard work, but the process often starts with reflection. One of the key requirements for self-improvement is having a realistic assessment of where we stand – of our strengths and our limitations. Convincing ourselves that we are better than we are leads to complacency, and thinking we’re worse than we are leads to defeatism.” – Serena Chan, professor of psychology, Berkeley.

Ambitious learners can raise their aspiration level by giving thought to their experiences, actions, feelings, and responses. By focusing on what they will gain from learning something new, even if it seems tedious or unappealing, they envision themselves reaping the rewards and it propels them into action.

### 2. Curiosity

We draw on language when we need to become curious to propel ourselves forward. Great learners ask themselves curious questions and follow up that self-talk with actions.

What interests me now?

What do I notice about the language I am using when I think about those things?

Why are others so excited about this?

How can this new knowledge or skill make my job easier?

What is one thing about this “boring” topic that can spark my curiosity?

People eager to learn seek out answers: read an article, query an expert, find a teacher, join a group – whatever feels easiest to channel that curiosity into something noteworthy.

### **3. Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is about being in tune with what you know and understand about your own character, feelings, motives and desires. In your quest for learning acquiring self-awareness is one of the biggest gifts you can give yourself.

This is by no means saying that you look inward because something is broken and needs fixing, or that you need to change your life. You choose to see yourself apart from your work, home, or environment to pinpoint emotions, motivations, triggers, etc that initiate both your positive and negative feelings. You look for insight to make sense of a situation so you can identify and distill what you learn. This leads to you being able to develop your own judgment and figure out your path and how learning fits with your goals.

### **4. Ability to Manage Internal Dialogue to Accept Vulnerability**

Even when we are skilled or proficient in some key aspects of a job, we can feel ill at ease with a new learning situation. Because it has been so ingrained in our psyche that we should play to our strengths, exert independence, and authority, even the thought of admitting we are inexperienced or unqualified causes us to feel vulnerable, even foolish. As an adult, it can be a tough thing to accept feeling so dependent or exposed. In times like this internal dialogue can be filled with self-criticism.

Great learners use self-talk to allow themselves to feel vulnerable in being a novice on the learning curve. They manage their internal dialogue by avoiding terrible repetitious thoughts that take up room in the brain: I'll never get this right? I'm such an idiot? This is so frustrating. I hate this. They embrace a growth mindset to banish those negative reactions or thoughts.

Self-talk is a critical aspect of learning, because when you choose your thoughts, it changes brain chemistry. Give yourself permission to be vulnerable. Instead of thinking in dichotomies, as in things are good or bad, right or wrong, give yourself permission to expect mistakes while learning and making changes. Acknowledge your beginner status and use self-talk that is more relaxing and encouraging.

Practice saying:

I've never done this before so I'll be an amateur in the beginning.

I have a lot to learn about this new technology. I'm a quick study, so I'll be able to pick it up.

My skills will be mediocre to start. I'm going to learn this over time.

Vocalizing statements such as these will actually cause your central nervous system to relax.

Self-talk strategies leads to heightened interest into what you are doing and the persistence to keep going, which result in greater opportunities to perform better.

## More Strategies to Help you Become a more Effective Learner

Learning a new skill and mastering it may not happen in a matter of days or week. Some things simply take a longer sustained effort. If you want to be an expert, researcher and writer, Josh Kaufman, says “knowing nothing to being pretty good” actually takes about 20 hours of practice – that’s 45 minutes every day for a month. In Outliers, author Malcolm Gladwell suggests that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to become expert at something. Twenty hours? 10,000 hours? One month? Twelve months?

No matter what you undertake you have to allow time to learn the subject matter and related skills well enough to effectively amalgamate your new knowledge and skills with other core competencies. That is the only way to gain the experience and insight to perform at different levels of complexity in real-life situations. Instead of thinking of the learning curve as one thing, view it as steps toward one key goal.



To master the learning curve you will need to be prepared and committed. Here are strategies to help you become a more effective in mastering whatever you undertake to learn.

**First, accept that today is a new “Starting Point”:** Accept wherever you are and start making solid strategic decisions to pursue learning, whatever that might be for you.

- Work objectives and/or competency development
- Learn a new language or play a musical instrument
- Learn a new skill and experience it in different ways
- Expand vocabulary or practice non-dominant hand exercises

## **1. Identify the gaps in your learning**

Have you forgotten about your strengths or weaknesses? Even if you are seriously motivated, enjoy what you do, and turnout stellar performances, there must be gaps in your skill-sets or things that you would like to advance, change or pursue in your life. To determine your learning priorities for the coming year create a list from these questions:

- What are my areas of strength?
- Do any of these strengths need further development?
- For me to advance my life, what do I need to learn today to eliminate or minimize one of my weaknesses?
- What competencies do I desire?
- What gaps do I have in skills, abilities and knowledge? Are there core competencies that I need to develop? Self-awareness, aspiration, curiosity, or the mindset to manage internal dialogue – things to help you to become a more effective learner?
- Does my company’s strategic plan requires me to acquire new skills, abilities or knowledge?
- For me to advance in my career, in keeping with my aspirations, what skills, abilities or knowledge should I be developing?

## **2. Prerequisite Skills**

Effective learning depends on the complexity of what you are learning and level of proficiency you have in prerequisite skills. For example, you cannot become a champion ice skater unless you know how to skate. You cannot be a journalist without having basic investigative, communication, and writing skills.

What prerequisite skills do you need to enhance first? Deficiency in a basic skill can hinder learning the tougher stuff that requires higher skill levels. If you are prone to procrastinating, having difficulty setting priorities, need help recalling what you learn, or are weak in any one of a dozen other basic skills, you might want to tackle those prerequisite skills first. You have to plan accordingly because any skill has a learning curve, requiring attention and time.

- Prioritize your list and determine your mode of learning for each competency. Look for the competencies that fit with each other or your long term goals.
  - Formal instruction (personal coaching, community college courses)
  - Informal learning opportunities (self-study, job-based assignments, workshops, company training, webinars, etc.)
  - Ask for recommendations from people, whose opinions you trust  
Coach/mentor/professional network.
  - Do you know others with the same learning need? Call a meeting and suggest you become a learning community/support group, poised to learn together and from each other.

### **3. Map out a plan**

All learning requires a plan. That plan should allow for the time required to move up the learning curve from where you are to where you want to be. For effective learning to happen, it needs to be incorporated into your daily routine. It is essential that you create a realistic plan and commit to your learning.

- Put your plan in writing.
- Assign a timeline and deadline for each competency on your priority list. This is a crucial step that helps ensure your learning intentions will not be overlooked.
- Make your plan or calendar of progress visible as a reminder and incentive to remain accountable to your learning path. You want to stay focused on your learning curve and the end result.
- Allow for flexibility, especially if you are involved in formal training and need to work with another person's schedule.

### **4. Deliberate Practice**

What experts, Gladwell, Kaufman, and others stress is that practice is essential. Deliberate practice means you give practice your full attention. Practice activities should be well defined, designed by a teacher, if possible. There is value in using a step-by-step guide or plan created by experts in the field of interest. Remember, time is not a predictor of your effectiveness – your mastery of knowledge or a skill is what should determine where you are on the learning curve, how much more practice you need or what your next phase of learning should be.

- There should also be a method of feedback or a way to measure improvement or change in performance. If you do not have a teacher or instructor, seek good feedback from experts to determine your competence and use their advice wisely.
- For real improvement, practice should not be light or performed on autopilot; it should take you out of your comfort zone. In fact, for best results it should be done at or near maximal effort. If you are not seeing constant, little improvements, you should modify your efforts. You may have to focus on building and improving specific aspects of a skill first.
- You can create practice partnerships to hold each other accountable for practice. It is also a great way to get feedback on your development.
- Let's face it; some things are tough to master. Consider coaching. Sometimes you need more support. A good coach will help you create a plan, offer feedback, and help you stay accountable to your own goals.

## **5. Motivation**

Your motivation affects the amount of time that you are willing to devote to learning or practice. Here is a fact. Humans are motivated to develop competence and to solve problems. Learners of all ages are more motivated when they can see the usefulness of what they are learning and when they can use that information to do something that has an impact on others, which also makes them feel proud, successful or creative. Choose something that makes you feel good about learning.

## **6. Surround yourself with people who will inspire, encourage, or help you to acquire new skills and knowledge**

Your circle of family and friends may not always be available. For added reinforcement, read the life stories of people who learned from their experiences and shared insight. Talk to people, ask questions, analyze opinions, and look for advice from mentors.

## **7. Everyone has their own timeline – be patient**

Above all do not compare yourself to others. Don't worry about what other people are doing – just focus on what's right for you. Do not let the actions of others (friends, coworkers, family) dictate what you think everyone else will do. It isn't really about trusting others, it's about trusting yourself. You must learn to trust your ideas, your thoughts and those feelings that show up pushing you forward in your pursuit of learning. As you enhance learning and follow your advancement on your learning curve you will also see your passion and confidence develop along with your abilities. Emulate the persistence and patience of all the people you admire be they artists, athletes, astronauts, neurosurgeons or inspiring speakers who put in years of hard work to get where they are today.

## **8. Life coach**

Sometimes when you know what you want to achieve, but not how to do that, engaging with a life coach can be extremely advantageous in gaining better awareness of what holds you back from moving forward.



## Managing the Learning Curve at a New Job



When you starting a new job you are definitely stepping out of your comfort zone and stretching out to expand in new directions. It is good to expose yourself to new opportunities for a lots of new learning. However, it can be overwhelming because you face a new learning curve.

Transfer of your previous knowledge, competencies and experiences is not always automatic. You need to learn different office procedures and gain understanding of new ideas before you can integrate your existing know-how. You may need to develop skills you have not used before. Of course you feel under pressure to make a good impression and do well. It can be nerve-wracking which can add unnecessary stress to your life and work routine. That's why it's important to remember that you have to advance through the stages of the learning curve as you settle in and become adept at your new responsibilities.

It's okay to feel frustration, but be patient and kind to yourself.

- Be willing to learn. No one expects you to have it all figured out on your first day or even your first week or two, but they do expect the rookie to be willing and ready to learn.
- Take your time to do each task well.
- Do not put much pressure on each situation. When a mistake happens admit the mistake and try to fix it. If you do not know how, ask your coworker or supervisor what he or she thinks is best.
- Don't go home and berate yourself with negative self talk because you lack understanding or make a mistake. Everyone who starts a new job or a new skill should expect it to be difficult in the beginning. There is a lot of new stuff to remember and become accustomed to. A good leader will not expect perfection and certainly would never make you feel unintelligent while you learn how to do your job. They hired you because they believed you could do the job, so believe in yourself, too.
- Instead of seeing new learning as limitations or weakness see it as a great learning experience and an opportunity to make strides forward in your learning journey and career. Given your own set of values and the goals you have set for yourself, would it be It might be considered a personal failure if you denied yourself an opportunity to learn and gave up?
- Pay attention to the moments that you are navigate well in your new role, the times you succeed. Every small win is important, like recognizing a client's name or being able to answer his questions. Recognize the times you may be inspiring others or how you worked in cooperation with your team to get important work done.
- Before your colleagues worked with little or no supervision they were all in your position at one point in the job. Instead of being intimidated by their knowledge or experience celebrate that they have the expertise to serve as your mentors.
- Expect that it could take two to three weeks to get comfortable with new practices and settle into your new surroundings.
- Pay attention to how long it takes you to settle into your new position. Knowing that about yourself might make you feel better the next time you find yourself as a newbie.

## **Pointers to Settle in with More Ease**

Here are a few other pointers to help you settle in and gain the confidence and competence necessary to advance on a new learning curve.

- Start by introducing yourself to your coworkers, instead of relying on them to do it for you. Engage in conversation and ask them about their roles and responsibilities.
- Keep a notepad handy and write things down. In a new job there is lots of new information coming at you; it might be easy to forget key details. Note the sequence and steps of any responsibility you need to perform. This will help you do the job more quickly and easily the next time round. Whether it's a name, a task you've been given or snippets of information about the company or clients, your notes will not only be a handy reference they will help you feel self-reliant.
- Absorb the positives of what is going on around you. Ask questions. It not only helps you comfortable settle into your new role, these are opportunities for new knowledge and insights into the routines, needs of clients, company culture and anything else that broadens your perspective of your new responsibilities.
- Don't let the mood of the office affect you. Let negative things slide. Often these will dissipate. Ignore what doesn't concern you and just do your job. Don't let other the mood and opinions of others influence your opinion of your job position, the company or coworkers.
- Meetings with your manager are the perfect opportunity to make sure you are on the right track and doing everything that is expected of you. Don't be afraid to ask for a meeting if you have any questions or concerns.
- Offer to help when someone needs it. This is a great way to expose yourself to new tasks, different expertise, learn new skills, show your colleagues you're a team player, and also learn more about the company culture.

Job anxiety usually lessen in a matter of a few days. However, depending on the new position and the learning curve, it can take two to three weeks to fully get your bearings in your new environment and it could take a couple of months before you feel that you have settled in and know what you are doing. This period could be shorter if you change positions and continue to work for the same company, but it could also be prolonged for up to six months when you assume a totally different role in an entirely unfamiliar company. If you are in training or an apprenticeship position with demanding skill requirements and examinations, learning could take much longer.

## Summing Up

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The words “accomplishment” and “achievement” are often retrospective, as you look back at your life to acknowledge something already completed. If you were to make a list of all you have accomplished in life, large and small you would probably recognize that fulfillment does not come from you doing easy work. It comes in the afterglow of satisfaction you feel after stepping out of your comfort zone to achieve a tough goal. You know the sense of satisfaction you get when you put in effort, do the kind of work that demands your best, contributes value, and makes a difference. These are the kind of accomplishments you can savour and recall for motivation when facing a new challenge.

Now if you were to single out the five most memorable or gratifying ones, in all likelihood the ones that have the most intrinsic value are not only the tough ones – and some of the most frustrating, too – they are high points in your life. Now, you may view the exasperating parts of the experience as the fun parts of learning. However, just because you’ve reached those milestones you should not simply glide along in the afterglow of contentment or stop reaching for new high points. The truth is we all need more of those types of personally meaningful goals and achievement experiences to bolster our well-being and expand our lives in new directions. We ask you to do that.

We ask you to make it a priority to pursue learning. Research shows that when you are intensely engaged in doing and learning new things your well-being flourishes, along with improved health and longevity.

We ask you to learn well, not fast. Within every experience there is meaningful knowledge or insight, teaching us something that adds to our array of abilities and can be stashed away for future use. We ask you to step forward to pursue a new passion or learn new skills for your career and to develop those skills through doing, repeated practice in real life situations or step forward and learn something that causes your heart to flutter with excitement.

You can always identify something new to learn. It might mean taking a leadership role. By that we mean self-leadership – expanding your life to experience something different, stimulating, or challenging. We ask you to take one step to lead yourself out of your comfort zone to develop your mind and body and bolster your spirit, be they skills like curiosity, self-care, self-awareness, or mindfulness. Sometimes it is easy to forget that you need to master the learning curve to enhance your character strengths, positive emotions or personal connections, so crucial to amping up your happiness.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to learning or mastering the learning curve. But one thing is not indisputable and very clear – you cannot rush through the learning process. The goal should always be to build solid skills for a strong foundation. Moreover, you should enjoy the process and the results rather than hurrying to get to the next step.

Today, there seems to be a rush to learn things quickly – to ‘tick off’ accomplishments. It’s easy to look at the experts, admire their accomplishments and want to emulate them. You may gasp when you do not succeed immediately, but just remind yourself their strong skills and abilities were acquired through many hours or years of hard work. Remind yourself that not everything needs to be accomplished today.

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## Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey

At Corro, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate your journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community-driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

**Corro is not just a Work Space – Our Aim is Helping the Community Thrive through People Success**