



# AWAKE

To The  
Power  
Of  
YOU



A parent switches to “tough love” tactics but the son’s behavior gets even worse.

A teacher asserts healthy boundaries but parents take even greater advantage.

A numbers-oriented business owner tries to “win friends and influence people” but leads dry up.

## What if it’s a Mistake to Step Outside Your Comfort Zone?

Our comfort zone is, obviously, where we’re comfortable. So is that such a bad place to be?

We certainly hear a lot of people telling us to step out of it. In fact, just the phrase “comfort zone” conjures a whole series of negative associations from unthinking, habit-driven, in-a-rut behavior to complete stagnation. So no wonder we’re urged to push it, get out, and leave it behind.

The problem is that numb, unthinking, habit-driven behavior *isn’t* a comfort zone, it’s a default zone.

## Comfort Zone vs. Default Zone: What’s the Difference?

**Our default zone is about habits and fear.** Compared to our comfort zone where we’re actively engaged with who we are, where we shine and what we love, our default zone is where all that engagement has been shut down by fear. It’s not the idea of trying something new that stops us, it’s trying something new for fear we might fail or things might be tough. Fear saps energy like nothing else. And when we’re low on energy, it’s easier (and safer) to rely on habits.

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*We certainly hear a lot of people telling us to step out of our comfort zone.*

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Every habit was once a strategy — a way we devised to deal with a situation. Strategies that work become habits. Procrastination, for example, may be a bad habit, but it works: if you put things off long enough someone else may step in and do them, the need to do anything may go away, or the crisis created may finally generate enough energy so you can get things done at the very last moment. Our default zone is where we’re so exhausted from fear that we can’t put energy into thinking about new strategies. So, we stay stuck in our existing habits of behavior, beliefs, and environment.

**Our comfort zone is about strengths and strategies.** Our comfort zone is made up of our strengths, passions and values. It's where we feel strongest and smartest, and where we operate most efficiently and effectively. It's where we feel energized enough — and safe enough — to consider new strategies. So instead of being a negative “rut,” our comfort zone is actually a powerfully positive place. In fact, when you experience the power of being in your comfort zone, the *last* thing you'll want to do is get out.



## Start Working *With* Yourself

When you're in your comfort zone, you're not only comfortable, you're *effective*.

**For example, suppose our comfort zone is being a co-pilot.** If that's the case, we're probably *already excellent* at being a co-pilot. We're great at navigating, communicating and teamwork. We observe and remain calm, but we can also take charge in an emergency. In other words, our “co-pilot comfort zone” isn't being about staying stuck and feeling passive or powerless. It's about recognizing and *using* the strengths we have already honed. That feels *good*.

**But then someone tells us it's better to be a pilot.** Maybe we even tell ourselves we *should* be a pilot because pilot strengths are more valuable. So we step out of our comfort zone and try to be someone we're not. It feels *uncomfortable*. It can also feel like failure because we're attempting to engage with our world but we've disconnected from all our strengths.

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*When you're in your comfort zone, you're not only comfortable, you're effective.*

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The other choice (and it's *always* about choice) is to stay right there in our comfort zone where we are an excellent co-pilot. We recognize who we are. Even better, we can use our wonderfully familiar strengths to engage with life as a genuine and experienced co-pilot. We move forward faster because we're not trying to learn *someone else's* skills. Instead, we're free to navigate any direction we choose and focus our tried-and-true strengths on achieving all-new success.



# The Power of Being Comfortable

**When we're in our comfort zones, it shows.** We appear confident, we feel confident, and we spend a lot of time "in flow" where our efforts seem effortless and we enjoy the satisfaction of being able to shape what happens in our world. But when we're *outside* our comfort zone, things that seem like they should work for us, don't. Let's take a look:

For a single mom we know, the comfort zone includes being highly collaborative, relationship-oriented, loving, and spontaneous. Those strengths have made her a wonderful mother and she has built a strong relationship with her son. But now, her 20-year-old son has flunked out of college and returned home with an attitude and behaviors that are making life difficult. Her friends say it's time for "tough love," including hard and fast rules, rigid structure and consequences.

**Feeling that this is what a good parent should do,** she feels she has to "get out of her comfort zone" and take on the role of policeman. She maps out a timetable for her son to either enroll in the community college or get a job and start contributing rent. It's not that the tough-love tactics are wrong, but that they're wrong for this particular mom. She is not comfortable being a policeman. That's why, despite her best efforts, her attempts to act like one don't ring true. She's miserable and — unbelievably — her son's behavior gets even worse. He sleeps even later, he does even less around the house, and has become surprisingly disrespectful. She feels like a failure because no matter how hard she tries to enforce rules and administer consequences, her son doesn't take her seriously.

**Thinking that she was giving up, she stepped back into her comfort zone.** She was actually returning to her source of strength: instead of laying down the law, she opened up about her concerns for her son, how much she loved him and how she wanted to find a way they could both work together to fix what wasn't working. The atmosphere at home changed almost immediately — a relief to them both. Will the son quickly get a job or enroll in college? The mom has more power to bring this about now that she's playing *with* her strengths rather than against them. She is feeling better about herself, the situation and her son. And her son is more cooperative now that he is working again with the mom he genuinely knows and trusts, not a phony policeman.

## How Do You Find Your Comfort Zone ... and Stay There?

To find your own unique comfort zone, you have to go back to what we said earlier: your comfort zone is **who you are, where you shine and what you love**. Define this and you awake the profound power that is *you* — genuine you, you at your best, you at your happiest, most confident and most fulfilled.

When you define your comfort zone in these terms, it's these values that become your filter for making every choice, setting every goal and living every wonderful moment of life. Success and satisfaction *automatically* flow from



being more comfortable in your skin and more clear about who you are, what makes you happy, what frustrates you and how you want to feel. Likewise, confidence and personal growth accelerate once you start filtering life through your true values, strengths and dreams rather than through fear and habits.

All this power comes from being awake to who you are and how you want to live:

## Being awake to your comfort zone gives you the power to use strengths you already have to live the life you've always dreamed.

- To articulate who you are, who you want to be, and where you're going
- To stop drifting and feeling frustrated, dissatisfied, and that you're failing
- To know why you get up in the morning – and feel good about it
- To carry an inner sense of safety, worth and confidence wherever you go

Now, most of us have given thought to *goals* or *achievements*. But have we ever focused — really focused — on defining our strengths and dreams? It's not always easy to know how to do it or where to start. That's why developing the skills to recognize and use the comfort zone is such an important element in every LiveWell Institute workshop.



Another important element of these workshops is the AWAKE Methodology™ or **AWAKE**, a five-step process created by The LiveWell Institute to give people a simple way to work through any problem or achieve any goal, large or small:

**A**TENTION  
**W**HAT'S WORKING, WHAT'S NOT  
**A**WARENESS  
**K**NOWLEDGE  
**E**NERGY

Through these five steps, the process focuses us on what's really going on, what needs to happen, *and* how to marshal the energy to do what needs to be done. Instead of just defining a problem or opportunity, AWAKE lets us use self-awareness to implement one easily attainable goal after another. The result is the power to obtain brighter possibilities *and* a plan, plus the energy to put the plan into action. You'll be able to apply AWAKE to any problem in your life or any change you want to make. Right now, we're going to show you how to AWAKE your comfort zone.

# AWAKE to the Power of YOU

## STEP 1: ATTENTION

**Let's start by focusing.** Put your full attention on the concept of a comfort zone ... *your* comfort zone. Now, write down at least three answers to each of the questions below. *(Some examples are at the left just to help you get started.)*

Reliability  
Honesty  
Efficiency  
Creativity  
Frugality  
Charisma  
Generosity  
Perspective  
Energy

**What are your strengths?**

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Competitive  
Speaking  
Listening  
Analyzing  
Persuading  
Collaborating  
Cheer-leading  
Inspiring  
Comforting

**In what situations do you shine?**

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Learning  
Teaching  
Social  
Organizing  
Problem-solving  
Leading  
Partnering

**What kinds of situations do you love?**

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Congratulations! By focusing attention on who you are, where you shine and what you love, you've located your own power base: your comfort zone. Next: how to get there?



## STEP 2: WHAT'S WORKING, WHAT'S NOT

**Comfort zone vs. default zone: where are you now?** A teacher we know felt increasingly helpless as parents seemed to take more and more advantage of her. They called her on weekends, emailed her at night, asked for extra attention for their children during lesson time.

**The teacher looked at what wasn't working in the situation without also looking at her strengths.** Because of this, she saw only that she was being taken advantage of without also seeing how her strengths could be used to bring the situation back into balance. Instead, she left her comfort zone (excellent teacher, warm and empathetic) and decided she needed to be more "business-like." The email she sent to parents was indeed more business-like — so much so that parents felt they were not only being criticized, but cut off. This had the effect of *intensifying* the need they felt to engage with the teacher. Feeling even more overwhelmed, the teacher went back to her comfort zone: using her strength to empathize, she realized that the initial upsurge in parental communications had coincided with the increased class sizes this year: *of course* parents were worried. She sent another email, this time a very warm communication recognizing their concerns and explaining in detail the teaching strategies she was using to compensate for the larger class size. The warm tone reassured parents that they — and their children — had her full attention and that they could have confidence in her skills as a teacher. As if by magic, calls from parents diminished and the teacher felt back in control of her time and her classroom.

**The moral of the story:** when we start to feel *uncomfortable*, we need to compare what we know works for us (our strengths) with what isn't working. This is how such a comparison would look for our teacher:

What Works for Me	What Isn't Working
Empathy	I feel parents don't understand how much time they are taking out of my day – at school and at home.
Being an excellent teacher	I feel parents don't trust me or don't think I'm doing a good job. I don't feel free to use my skills and judgment without having to explain why I'm doing things the way I am. I feel undercut, second-guessed and undervalued.
Warmth	I am not able to be open and warm – I feel I need to be guarded (I need to guard my time and be guarded in my communications so I don't let parents take advantage of me). I feel I have to be guarded in how I interact with the children so it won't trigger a call from parents.

Working through this same exercise helps us get back into our comfort zone, not just to feel better, but to fix anything that's not working. So, take a moment now to do your own quick inventory of what is and isn't working.

List the strengths you identified in the ATTENTION step on page 5. Then, think about how well your strengths are being recognized.

What Works for Me (strengths)	What Isn't Working (where I feel discomfort)

### STEP 3: AWARE

**What do you see?** Once we start looking at what's working and what isn't, we begin to see patterns of where we do and don't feel comfortable. This helps us get even clearer about our comfort zone.

A business owner, for example, has built his success on being intensely numbers-oriented and working behind the scenes to spot market opportunities. Now, he wants to accelerate growth and hires a business consultant who advises him to shift his focus from numbers to relationships. He assigns the business owner to read Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends*



*and Influence People.* The business owner is uncomfortable (red flag!) with the idea, but dutifully shifts his attention from analyzing market metrics and product margins to “getting out there” at networking events where he is (again, red flag) uncomfortable. New prospects don’t flow in from his relationship-building efforts. Meanwhile, he’s missing the opportunities he used to mine from number-crunching the data. Leads dry up.



**The importance of filters.** If the business owner had been clear about his comfort zone, he could have filtered the advice of the consultant: “Yes, that’s a great strategy for most people, but I’m a little introverted and I’m most comfortable in analytic situations — I’m not sure I’d be great at social events and networking. I shine at analytics: let’s figure how to take *that* to the next level.”

Here’s an example of how our business owner might use his awareness as a filter:

Comfort Zone	Discomfort Zone
Highly productive	Spending time and having nothing to show for it Being with people who are not focused and motivated Having to slow myself down so others can catch up
Analytic, Evidence-loving	Where there’s no data Where there’s no evidence that something is worth pursuing Where you rely on people’s impressions or opinions
Introverted, a thinker and private	Where I have to talk without thinking Where conversations get too personal about family or interests Where what people talk about is really shallow

Now, using the elements of your own comfort zone, focus on situations that cause discomfort. Being aware of these discomfort zones helps you filter your choices.

Comfort Zone	Discomfort Zone

## STEP 4: KNOWING

**How do we begin to use our comfort zone?** Now that we're aware of areas in our life that are causing discomfort, we need to know how to get back to our comfort zone. To do that, we need to remember two things: change can be scary and some situations can't be changed.

Often, we stay stuck in a discomfort zone (or even a default zone) because even though we know what needs to change ... it's just too big a change to make at this time. We don't want to move, go on an austerity budget, or switch jobs and lose our status, vacation time, flexibility or pension. We don't *want* to give up our partner who travels too much ... or drinks too much ... or supports us too little. We *can't* change the fact that we're dealing with illness, loss or limits.

And that's okay. Because what we're focusing on here is your comfort zone and [how to be comfortable even in difficult situations](#).

### Knowing how to use your comfort-zone strengths means you can change how you experience difficult situations.

This step of the AWAKE process is so important! This is how you get the power to carry that sense of security and control inside, no matter what's happening outside. To do it, let's start with brainstorming. Think of something in your life that is an uncomfortable situation that you can't change. Now, look at your strengths and brainstorm ways to use these strengths to get more comfortable in this difficult situation.

Here's an example: A sales analyst knows that her boss makes her feel on-guard, invisible and unappreciated. She also knows that jobs are hard to get, her benefits are good and she doesn't want to take the financial and emotional risks of changing jobs right now. She can stay in default mode ("I don't take it personally ...") or she can get back into her comfort zone.

What isn't working	How it makes you feel	Comfort Zone	I could ...
My boss criticizes my work unfairly	Unappreciated Invisible Angry I fear I'll be fired	Communication  Good thinker	<b>IDEA 1: Speak up.</b> I could use the words I want to hear from my boss: <b>appreciate</b> and <b>recognize</b> . <i>"The way I presented the report doesn't work? Let me tell you my <u>thinking</u> behind the format: I recognize your concern about the report seeming lightweight, but our busy managers genuinely seem to appreciate the concise <u>communication</u> of data."</i> So even if appreciation and recognition aren't coming directly from my boss, I am making these words part of the conversation.

The brainstorming is just a jump-starter. Even if you don't discover the solution immediately, your brain will continue to percolate and you will discover that you *do* know a way to feel more comfortable in a difficult situation. This example is also just one kind of situation. You can apply what you know about your comfort zone to live more successfully with a chronic illness or to cope more effectively with a devastating loss.

Pick a challenge you're facing now and see what happens as you work through it. See how many ideas you can come up with. Don't pre-judge ideas, just list them and list as many as you can.

What isn't working	How it makes you feel	Comfort Zone	I could ...
			<p>IDEA 1:</p>          <p>IDEA 2:</p>          <p>IDEA 3:</p>          <p>IDEA 4:</p>

## STEP 5: ENERGY

**Knowing our comfort zone isn't enough.** We want to *live in that zone every day* and use our comfort-zone strengths to filter our choices and make it easier to achieve all-new success. For that, we need the focus and energy that come from having a plan. See how the grid on the next page gives you the elements of your plan for using your comfort zone to make life even better.

**STEP 5: ENERGY** (continued)

What I want to stop, start or continue	What aspect of my comfort zone does this reflect or support?	How will this change affect my daily schedule?	What default habits will I need to rethink and which of my comfort zone strengths will help me?
Ex: Have more couple time	Having a strong relationship with my wife	<p>I will get up 15 minutes earlier to share coffee together</p> <p>I will call my wife at lunchtime</p> <p>I will plan an overnight getaway within the next 2 months</p>	<p><b>HABIT:</b> Procrastination  <b>STRENGTH:</b> Planning – put a getaway and the calls on my calendar now!</p> <p><b>HABIT:</b> That she already knows how I feel  <b>STRENGTH:</b> I’m a good communicator – <i>talk</i> to her, stay in touch.</p> <p><b>HABIT:</b> That I don’t have any “extra” time in my day  <b>STRENGTH:</b> Creativity – how can I combine things to open up space?</p>

Now, try filling out your own grid:

What I want to stop, start or continue	What aspect of my comfort zone does this reflect or support?	How will this change affect my daily schedule?	What default habits will I need to rethink and which of my comfort zone strengths will help me?

# Who You Are, Where You Shine and What You Love

Welcome to your comfort zone! Now that you're here, there's no need to leave. And while others may feel that growing and making new achievements means having to push themselves into adopting uncomfortable skills and roles, you can enjoy the pure comfort of using skills you already have to live the life you've always dreamed.

*The comfort zone concept and AWAKE Methodology™ are examined in more depth in workshops from The LiveWell Institute, and applied to topics ranging from preventing burnout and bullying to building stronger families, businesses and classrooms.*

## ABOUT THE LIVEWELL INSTITUTE

Judy Kirkland and Susan Weaver, authors of *AWAKE to the Power of YOU*, are co-founders of The LiveWell Institute.

The LiveWell Institute provides facilitator training, workshops and books that focus on practical ways to use self-awareness to 'wake up' to new ways to live well and to *make a difference*.

Ready-to-present workshops can be licensed and used immediately and effectively by schools, HR directors, parishes, life coaches, wellness coaches, business consultants, therapists ... anyone who wants to teach. The thinking is already there, the presentations are well-researched and entertaining, and our facilitator training provides even first-timers the know-how and confidence to present like pros. Workshops also feature The LiveWell Institute's exclusive AWAKE Methodology™ to coach audiences from *learning* life-changing skills ... to actually *living* them.

If you are interested in attending a workshop or becoming a LiveWell Institute facilitator, please visit:  
[www.TheLiveWellInstitute.com](http://www.TheLiveWellInstitute.com)

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