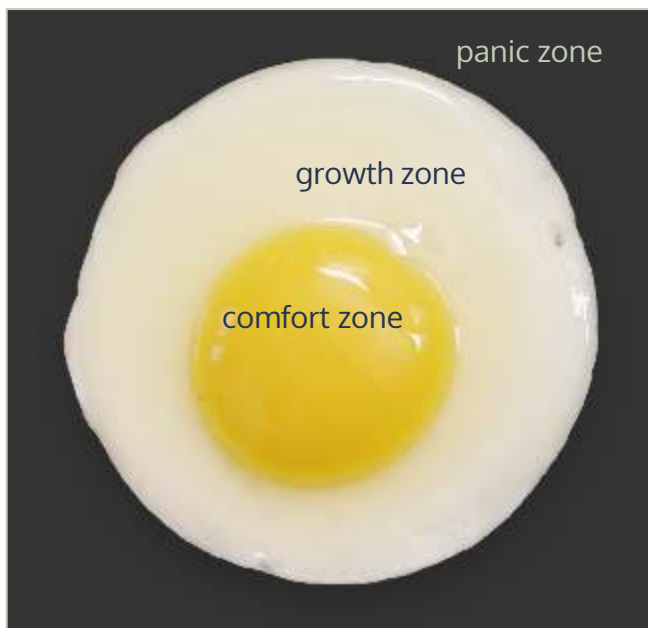


Coping with Change

When I was a counselling student I was introduced to this way of looking at change. You may be wondering why the fried egg. Our tutor drew three concentric circles on the board, and one of my colleagues remarked that it was "the fried egg model of change" and it has stuck ever since.



The egg also serves as a useful metaphor for looking at change. The yolk of the egg is fairly cool, and it changes slowly. You can touch the yolk of a frying egg and it won't burn, at least not to start with. Very little growth happens in the comfort zone. Further out is the white, and it's quite a bit hotter out here. The white changes quite quickly. This is the growth zone where most change happens. Further out is the frying pan. It's very hot here, and if you touch it, you will burn your finger. This is the panic zone, and like your finger you will want to get out of here pretty quickly.

The fried egg model suggests that the best place to be if you want to change is somewhere in between feeling safe and feeling panicky.

Why do we need to be a little hot?

In order to change you need to feel some stress.

"Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental and emotional responses. Stress is a normal part of life." (1)

Just as an actor needs to feel some anxiety to be able to give their best performance; we also need to feel some anxiety to cope with change. And as an actor has to balance between feeling too comfortable, making their performance lacklustre, against being too anxious and getting stage fright; coping with change is also a balancing act.

Accelerating and braking

Driving along a country lane is an everyday example of how people cope with change. We have to balance our need to be safe with our desire to get where we're going in an ever changing environment.

Sometimes you might find yourself stuck behind a tractor. You're going very slowly and safely. You might feel frustrated wanting to go faster and change up a gear. When you finally overtake the tractor, you feel a surge of anxiety, "Is there anything coming?" and then settle into this faster pace. As you accelerate the scenery starts to whiz by. The faster you go, the more anxious you feel. If you don't slow down, something could startle you, and you'll either swerve out of the way, or freeze with your foot on the brake.

The art of coping with change is to balance these two positions. Speeding up when you feel too safe, and slowing down as you start to feel too anxious.

(1) Definition of stress from Boots WebMD
<http://www.webmd.boots.com/stress-management/physical-stress-symptoms>