
UCF Forum

1-17-2018

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Adam Meyer

University of Central Florida, Adam.Meyer@ucf.edu

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STARS Citation

Meyer, Adam, "The Best Things in Life Come From Stretching Ourselves" (2018). *UCF Forum*. 289.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum/289>

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The Best Things in Life Come From Stretching Ourselves

By Adam Meyer

UCF Forum columnist

Wednesday January 17, 2018

How often do you get uncomfortable? A couple of years ago I bought a shirt as part of an adoption fundraiser. The front of the shirt said: “Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.”

That phrase has really resonated with me and has increasingly pushed me in many areas of my life – so much so that I really want 2018 to be a year where I challenge my comfort zone like never before.

As I have done some assessment of comfort zone, I have realized that we live in a culture that seemingly “challenges” and encourages all of us to experience comfort to the greatest extent possible. Perhaps this is most notably found in our financial pursuits where there is a feeling that more money leads to bigger and nicer things, as well as a feeling of overall security.

Obviously, there is a benefit to having money – and money is a good thing. Money does provide so much opportunity. But I think wealth can be pursued for the wrong reasons, as well. I wonder if money consciously or unconsciously pursued purely for the sake of greater comfort results in a deterioration of life in other ways.

I believe the best things in life come from stretching ourselves and getting uncomfortable.

Take health and fitness, for example. It is so deliciously tempting to sit on the couch and binge-watch a favorite Netflix series with a favorite sweet or salty snack in hand. That is comfortable, and physically unhealthy when done repeatedly. A good, heart-pounding, sweaty workout is uncomfortable in the moment, and physically and emotionally strengthening when done repeatedly.

I imagine we have all had moments where we went past our comfort zone. First job. Second job. Promotion. Moving to another city. Asking someone out on a date, getting a “yes” response and experiencing a great relationship. Having a child. Making a presentation for the first time. Going on a mission trip. Confronting a loved one about a

relationship concern that had a positive impact on the overall relationship long-term once discussed.

There are so many times when this happens in big and small moments in our life. And yet the natural tendency is to avoid it whenever possible and almost at all costs.

The biblical verses that speak of picking up your cross and following Jesus, and the notion that those who lose their life will find it, seem to push me as a Christian and challenge me more and more with each passing day, week and month. While living this way is not comfortable, it is amazingly energizing and rewarding. I do feel it is where and how my life has truly begun in many ways.

As one example, my wife and I adopted a boy with Down syndrome from China in April 2016 to add to our family of three sons. It was a decision that we cautiously made and with some level of fear and wonder as to what would happen. While we are still very early in this lifetime journey with him and while the past nearly two years have been more challenging and harder than we certainly envisioned, I have personally never felt so much peace, joy and energy. In the many sacrifices required to raise our wonderful son, I believe I have found so much more than would have otherwise been possible.

My goal is to stretch my comfort zone in all that I do as a husband, father, family member, employee and ultimately as a Christ-follower. And, if I am being honest, my life is still pretty comfortable, all things considered and relative to the experiences of many other people in the world who do not have the financial and material options we possess. There are still so many ways that I want to grow in this area, in part because I find myself invigorated and rewarded in concrete and unknown ways each time I choose to take the plunge and move past my fears.

There is almost an addiction to seeking out the next comfort-zone busting opportunity. And even if it fails or does not lead to the desired outcome, I feel I learn something from my trial-and-error experience. Frankly, I often wonder if I do not fail enough and if that means I am not challenging myself enough, as scary as that is to wonder.

We only live once and it will be done before we know it. I want to make as much difference as I can in the time that I have here before it all ends. And I really believe that begins with pushing past my comfort zone.

Perhaps you should challenge yourself to get uncomfortable and see where the adventure takes you.

Adam Meyer is executive director of UCF's Student Accessibility Services office and Inclusive Education Services. He can be reached at Adam.Meyer@ucf.edu.