

## Transcript for Andy Molinsky | A Reach from Comfort (Episode 612)

### Full show notes found here:

<https://theartofcharm.com/podcast-episodes/andy-molinsky-reach-comfort-zone-episode-612/>

ANDY: I probably won't be the best TED talker in the world and I probably also won't die on stage and be a total embarrassment. I might not be fantastic but I'll probably be better than I think and then next time around, I'll probably improve.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm Jordan Harbinger. On this episode we'll be talking with Andy Molinski. He's a professor of organizational behavior and psychology at Brandeis University. His new book is called [\*Reach: A New Strategy to Help You Step Outside Your Comfort Zone, Rise to the Challenge, and Build Confidence\*](#). On the show we talk a lot about pushing people outside their comfort zone but this particular episode is going to be a deep dive. We'll discuss why we should care about the topic of stepping outside our comfort zone in the first place, how we avoid stepping outside our comfort zones, fears and roadblocks, how they're different and how to manage them, and three key tools: conviction, customization, and clarity, that we can use to systematically attack our limitations in order to grow.

By the way, if you're new to the show we'd love to send you some top episode and the AoC Toolbox. That's where we study the science of people and discuss concepts like reading body language, charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, social engineering, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. Check that out at [theartofcharm.com/toolbox](https://theartofcharm.com/toolbox) or in our iPhone app at [theartofcharm.com/iphone](https://theartofcharm.com/iphone). Also at [theartofcharm.com](https://theartofcharm.com) you can find the full show notes for this and all previous episodes of the show. Whether this is your first or 500th episode of AoC, we're always glad to have you with us. Now, Andy Molinski.

Andy, thanks for coming and doing the show man, much appreciated.

ANDY: Yeah, I'm happy to be here. Thanks.

JORDAN: When I looked at the book [Reach](#), I'm thinking, "Okay a strategy to help you step outside your comfort zone, rise to the challenge, build confidence," -- I've heard a lot of this before. And, the problem with the topic is, okay we hear all these weirdo like life-coachy type people. "Get outside your comfort zone. Growth is outside your comfort zone." And I like those concepts but they've just been beaten to death by hacks, like me, who have no scientific evidence for how this is going to work and we just have anecdotal stories about this being effective. So what makes this different? How have you studied this that shows that this isn't just another motivational talk or book?

ANDY: I totally appreciate that and I feel the exact same way by the way. So you know I've always struggled outside my own comfort zone and when I went to look for the answers, I found exactly what you're talking about. I found, you know, if you Google "comfort zone", you'll find fish jumping out of fish bowls, you'll find people jumping off of cliffs and skydiving and, you know "All it takes is to take that leap," and so on. And you know, I think there's a grain of truth to it. It's motivational. It's sort of like motivational poster fodder.

JORDAN: Yes. It's Instagram memes and we want to get away from that, right?

ANDY: Exactly. So I'm a professor of organizational behavior and psychology and Brandeis University and so I was trained as a researcher and so I wanted to actually try to take a real serious look at this about -- Sort of a topic that's -- I think captured a lot of people's attention. And when something captures people's attention, there's a reason because a lot of us struggle outside our comfort zones. But I wanted to do it more scientifically and so what I did is I did it in a couple ways. The

first way is that I did my own research. I studied -- and what I mean by studied, is I conducted research interviews, sometimes observations, a lot of this work has been published in academic peer-reviewed journals, so there's sort of like a real scientific backbone to it. I spoke with managers, executives, entrepreneurs, doctors performing painful procedures. These are actually pediatric physicians performing painful procedures. It turned out actually that my own daughter had to have a spinal tap at seven days old --

JORDAN: Oh, my gosh.

ANDY: -- and it was right around the time I was doing this research, so I kind of saw it both ways there. Police officers -- I hung out at a police station -- major metropolitan city. I interviewed police officers over about a month's time and I also spend a day doing what they call a "ride along." So I went with two police officers in the back of a police car and we went on 20 different evictions.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

ANDY: These were police officers who were specializing in eviction so I had the bulletproof vest and everything and you know, witnessed 20 different evictions plus the sort of informal conversations. We studied actors, students. I wanted to really expand it. I talked to priests, rabbis, teachers, even a goat farmer. There's a funny backstory to that one but -- I get really obsessed with this. When I'm doing research, you know, I'm really obsessed and that goat farmer happened during a family vacation.

We were up in New Hampshire -- I'm from Boston -- we were up in New Hampshire and I started talking to this goat farmer and the topic of comfort zones came up and I said, "I have something to ask you," and my wife was like looking away like, "Oh, my God." So to answer your question, my own research -- I also, as a social scientist -- I also have the capacity to access other people's research and so I integrate that as well and so

the third source is frankly my own personal experiences. Now that's anecdotal as you talked about before but I think combined with the more serious research, I think you have a fairly solid basis in this book which distinguishes it from your, you know, typical self-help type of book.

JORDAN: Right, yeah, pop psychology, maybe? At best from a lot of these sources. And again, there's nothing wrong with it until it gets out of control and it becomes, "All you need to do is follow my Instagram and your life will change," and it's like, "Mmm, it's unlikely." So that was one of my initial hesitations but actually ended up getting me more interested in your work. Because, well first of all, I would like to think you don't end up a professor of organizational behavior and psychology at Brandeis because you have a killer Instagram, or Instagram level content.

ANDY: I just started Instagram this year and it was only because my 12 year old made me so --

JORDAN: Right, it wasn't required for tenure at Brandeis? Got it.

ANDY: No, no.

JORDAN: You've got stories from singers, actors, performers, goat farmers, police officers. What sort of throughline did you find when it came to the comfort one and becoming more confident and striking out. What did you find that goat farmers, police, singers, and actors have in common?

ANDY: There are three main questions that I look at in the book. I tried to organize it in a pretty structured way but also a simple way but also a simple way. And the first question that I wanted to try to figure out is why it's so hard to act outside your comfort zone, because obviously it's hard, but why? And so that's the first thing. The second was how do we avoid doing it, and I heard so many stories of avoidance. There's a lot of social science research about avoidance as well. And then the third was, what does it take to do it successfully? That's sort of like

the money question, right? That's the real key question. So I found and what was interesting about looking at people across these different professions, is I found really kind of strikingly similar findings in very different context.

JORDAN: I think for a lot of people, they might even think, "Look I've heard this comfort zone stuff a million times. This is nothing new. Why am I even listening to this?" And then it's like, well how often are you actually doing it, right? And it has to become this intentional process and I'm sure we'll get to that. But yeah, tell us, why we do we not do this other than the obvious which is that it's uncomfortable to do so?

ANDY: Right, the answer is the obvious, that it's uncomfortable to do so. But I think drilling down and digging beneath that is really critical. So I've found five different -- I call them psychological roadblocks. One is authenticity. The idea that this doesn't feel like me stepping outside my comfort zone, you know? Young entrepreneurs pretending to put on their grownup voice when pitching to venture capitalists or -- I remember me the very first time I stepped into a business school classroom to teach MBA students. I felt like a complete impostor.

So authenticity is a big one, or the feeling of inauthenticity. The second one is likeability, the idea that, "I'm afraid that people won't like this new version of me or this version of me acting outside my comfort zone." You know, people worrying that, "They'll hate me if I act more assertively than I'm comfortable with or used to." Or if I'm a people pleaser, as many of us are, "That person will hate me if I give critical feedback," and so on. So authenticity, likeability -- a third psychological roadblock is what I call competence, the idea that I'm afraid I'll look like a fool doing this -- giving that public speech. "I'm afraid to speak in public, I'll look like a fool. And by the way, I know, or I feel -- I have the premonition that other people will see me as a fool." Again, feeding into that idea that I'm an impostor. "Not only do I feel inauthentic, but I also feel incompetent and look incompetent."

A fourth one is resentment. I've heard this so many times with introverts talking about the experience of stepping outside their comfort zone. I mean the world that we live in, the work world, is I think biased towards extroverts in a lot of ways

JORDAN: Definitely.

ANDY: There are a lot of introverts out there who want to be able to get ahead and people can feel very frustrated with the fact that, for example, you know -- "It's not my skill, it's not my innate ability, it's my ability to network, chitchat, make small talk, and build that quick sense of camaraderie and trust with the people in the firm that's going to get me those, you know, plum assignments," and so on. And, you know, as an introvert you can have an inherent disadvantage and people feel really frustrated and resentful about the fact that they have to step outside their comfort zone. So, you've got authenticity, you've got likeability, you've got competence, you've got resentment, the last one is morality. Now this doesn't come up always, but there are plenty of cases where people feel that in a certain situation, acting outside their comfort zone is the wrong thing to do.

So I open the book, for example, with a story of a young entrepreneur who had to fire her best friend from her startup and she felt a pretty deep morality conflict or -- I also interviewed a woman who's a booker on a national TV show. Her job basically is to book guests, and especially, you know, there's a lot of competition around national tragedies let's say -- so let's say there were some tragedy and she has to get the family who's grieving to be on the network and she has to beat out all the other networks and so that's her job. It was very much outside her comfort zone. Eventually she left, it was such a burnout situation.

But, you know, I guess what I'd say is that yes, you're right that there is some things that are sort of simple or obvious or clichéd about the fact. Of course it's uncomfortable but I think when you start to have a vocabulary like this to pinpoint the

exact reasons why it's uncomfortable, I think you start to get a bit more leverage around acting outside your comfort zone.

JORDAN:

The authenticity thing is interesting and it struck me of course as the first thing you said but also it's one of the chief objections that I hear from people when they find out what this show is about, which is, in a way shocking, but then I try to figure out, "Okay, how was I 10, 11 years ago, 12 years ago, when I started this journey as well?" and my first thought was, "What kind of losers need stuff like this? Oh, self-help, that's ridiculous. Ugh, it's so stupid." And that was sort of the authenticity argument I think, in that a lot of people, when we say, "Look, you just need to learn a little bit of nonverbal communication," and this and that -- there's a certain type of person when they hear their friend listens to Art of Charm, that says immediately, "Oh, well, you know, I don't want to be fake," and it's like, "Well it's not really fake and in addition, what you're doing right now is not really working. The whole 'I'm too shy to network, I can't speak up in meetings, I'm not the type of guy or gal who does X,Y,Z.'"

That type of limiting behavior is career limiting, it's relationship limiting, it affects your happiness, your level of happiness throughout your whole life -- and so this authenticity argument is really not just something that we should take lightly because anything that conflicts with our identity can keep us in the same place we are now for the rest of our lives, which is dangerous for about 99 percent of the population, right?

And I think it's really dangerous to look at something like jumping outside your comfort zone in any area and I think we naturally -- our subconscious brain -- and you can speak to this probably better than I can, is always trying to grab us and pull us back in -- and reel us back in. So, it's the part of our brain that's coming up with these authenticity arguments, these sort of likeability arguments, "Well I don't want to lose my old friends if I do this."

And we even see this after our live programs that we have here at The Art of Charm. A lot of guys will come back -- or women will come back after seminars and their friends will go, "Oh, who's Mr. Outgoing now?" and they're kind of trying to reel you back in and it triggers this likeability thing where it's like, "Oh, you know, people around me are giving me a hard time for this because they don't know me as an outgoing person," or, "They don't know me as the person who speaks up in meetings. They don't know me as the person who goes out and gets business for the firm," and it starts to melt away and chip away at anything you work towards. So, it can be frustrating. It seems like getting outside our comfort zone, in many ways, can be like swimming upstream.

ANDY:

Yeah, exactly what you said. So, just in what you said, you've got the authenticity piece, you've got the likeability piece, you've got the competence piece. You didn't say it explicitly but I think a lot of people, when they probably step out of the work that you were doing, they're thinking to myself, "Oh, my God, can I pull this off? I look like a fool. I look like an idiot," right? And then the resentment piece, like, "Why do I have to do this in the first place?"

So, number one, it does take some courage to step outside your comfort zone, right? You're swimming upstream against the grain of all these things. I mean, from a psychological standpoint, when you feel self threatened, and that's what these things are, self threats, you know, your tendency is to avoid self threats, right? And avoidance is, you know, not doing the situation, not networking, not going and speaking up to that person. So we have a natural inclination to protect ourselves. And so in some ways, this is swimming upstream against that but, you know, that's where we'll get to the tools that you can use to step outside your comfort zone which kind of counteract that tendency to retreat.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)



JORDAN:

I think that it's funny the resentment part, it strikes a little bit of a nerve because I remember when I was younger, that was probably my chief thing. I was less worried about being fake because I thought, "Okay, you know, you've got to learn stuff." But resentment, the whole idea that maybe I could improve really irked me when I was 23, 24 years old, maybe a little younger than that. That just permeated every area of my life.

I remember thinking, "I shouldn't have to work harder at this, I'm already smart. I shouldn't have to dress differently, I'm already attractive. I shouldn't have to act differently, I shouldn't have to work, da, da, da. They should like me for who I am." Those things were a throughline for my entire teen years, my entire -- I remember not trying at all to make friends when I went on this trip abroad to Israel. And I just remember then resenting the isolation that I was feeling and it's just so silly to look back and go, "Yeah I didn't try at all and then I resented and regretted the lack of results that came from that." And people sit with that for decades or their whole life because they don't want to even think that there's maybe something they should be doing. In the moment it doesn't feel like the supreme arrogance that it really is.

ANDY:

And what I find when I work with people is that having this vocabulary, you know, it's like before I introduced these terms and these ideas, people just say, "Oh, it's hard," you know, "Oh, it's uncomfortable." But when they can start to pinpoint that's authenticity it's likeability, it's resentment, it's competence or whatever combo -- whatever cocktail it might be, it starts to give you just a little bit more control, I think, over the idea of stepping outside your comfort zone.

JORDAN:

Yeah I can see that. When we talk about emotions with a brain scientist and things like that, we talk about the idea that colors aren't just blue, red, and green and emotions aren't just happy, sad, etc. There's a million different shades of these things that are based on different words and different types of feelings and different types of experiences and I think that the comfort zone idea or leaving your comfort zone idea can be very

similar. "Oh, it's hard," becomes, "Well it's hard because my ego doesn't want to fail. Well it's hard because my ego doesn't want to think that I should actually have to put work into this. It's hard because I don't want to think and admit to myself that for years I've avoided this because I'm afraid." And once you can articulate these things a little bit better, at least in my experience -- once I could articulate these things a little bit better, I could call myself out on my own B.S. and it made it a lot easier to then make that leap.

So how do we get started with that? Is it just a matter of articulating why we don't leave our comfort zone? "Oh, it's my likeability thing. It's my resentment factor." What are we looking at? What's the action step that people can take instead of just saying, "Well it's really hard," to start really highlighting this?

ANDY:

Yeah so I found three things -- three tools. This is basically the thread that carried through everyone's stories and was also supported in social science research. But the first is what I call conviction and conviction is having that deep sense of purpose that this is worth it. Because if -- it's motivation essentially. It's if you don't have that -- if you don't recognize what your potential source of motivation is and then access it and embrace it, you're not going to fight through this discomfort because, as we talked about before, your natural inclination when you're feeling these threats, right -- you're feeling inauthentic and you're feeling incompetent or frustrated, is to retreat.

That's our natural inclination but you have to push through that and so conviction is critical and I tended to find two different general sources of conviction. One was a professional source of conviction. "I really need to learn to network because I want to be a manager and I've always wanted to be a manager and that's my goal," or, "I have this calling to be an entrepreneur and yes I'm great at creating products but I'm not so great at sales, I'm not so great at business development but

I'm going to do what it takes because I really want to be an entrepreneur," so that's a professional side of conviction.

But a lot of people had that personal side of conviction as well that -- I'll give you my own example. I have a 10 year old and a 12 year old and, you know I struggle outside my comfort zone all the time. I have and that's I think what's drawn me to this topic and whenever I'm afraid to do something, I access that personal source of conviction and I say to myself, you know, "I'm telling my kids that they should step outside their comfort zone and be courageous," you know, "I've got to step up."

JORDAN: Right, and here you are just not leading by example, right? Like, "You should do that!" "Daddy why don't you do it?" "Uh, want some ice cream?" Right?

ANDY: Exactly.

JORDAN: Yeah.

ANDY: Or just like even, you know, being the dad that you want to be or whatever it is, right? So, I mean it's very personal where your source of conviction is going to come from and it's -- this is not rocket science but what I think is really important, is sort of understanding the importance of conviction, locating your most powerful source of conviction, and then embracing it.

JORDAN: How do we identify that? Because it's really easy for us to say, "You just need a little conviction," and then people go, "Yeah." It's like motivation. "I need motivation," so they watch a couple Gary Vaynerchuk videos and then they're back to surfing the Web and on Facebook and they go, "Dammit," right? Conviction can be pretty elusive, I think, for a lot of us.

ANDY: I think it requires a real sort of, deep dive into what you care about and what you value, not looking at a couple of videos necessarily and moving on and trying to -- when you're

watching a video like that, you're trying to sort of ride the coattails of someone else's motivation in some ways. I think you need to look inside yourself and, you know, and what I provide in the book and elsewhere are questions to ask yourself, for instance, you know, to try to help you locate your source of conviction, what's in it for you. And by the way, if you have a real hard time locating your source of conviction, maybe this isn't something that's actually worth stepping outside your comfort zone for, right?

You know, we don't have to step outside our comfort zone in every situation. I don't think that's true. So if there truly is nothing in it for you in any significant way, if it's not the right thing for you to do, the necessary thing for you to do, something that will make you really feel good about yourself or enable you to help others, or if it's not your calling or whatever, you know, your source of conviction could be, if it's none of those, it might not be worth doing.

JORDAN: So conviction is situational -- it's dependent on the particular area that we're looking at exploring. It's not something that we have overall for always getting outside our comfort zone in every area, it's situational.

ANDY: Absolutely, it's situational and it's personal. It also can change over time in your lifetime, right? When you're in your twenties, your conviction might be quite different from when you're in your thirties and forties and so on.

JORDAN: Okay that definitely makes sense. And so when you say, "Look inside yourself and figure out where the conviction lies or how to harness this," what exactly do you mean? Because I think for a lot of us, again, it's easy to go, "I really need to get this area of my life together. I haven't been promoted for five years because I can't give presentations." There's motivation there, there is a fire under your butt because you're getting passed up for promotion, but that's different than conviction, right? It's different than actually wanting to get over it. Perhaps we're still subconsciously sabotaging ourselves because we're not

really convicted. We don't have that conviction, we just have a motivation but it's insufficient to jump over the wall.

ANDY:

Yeah psychologists talk about a distinction between want and should and I think that the more powerful source of motivation is a want. You know a should is sort of a requirement, I don't think you're going to probably generate as much sort of, intrinsic motivation to step outside your comfort zone if you're in the world of should. But if you can access your want, what you really want for yourself, I think it's a stronger, more robust source of motivation, at least that's what psychology would say. And so I think that's something to try to access. But I think you're right, by the way, that a lot of people get confused about this. We can trick ourselves, we can be unsure.

So conviction is not the only thing here, by the way, and sometimes what the next thing you can do, which is called customization -- if you can even start there, that can maybe over time, help you unlock what your source of conviction might be. This, I think, was probably the most surprising thing I found in my research and it's also probably the most powerful and most concrete. It's the idea that when we're stepping outside our comfort zones in situations that are hard, you know, we often don't realize that we have more power than we think to -- I guess I would call to tweak or to adjust or to personalize that situation even subtly in way that makes it just that little bit more authentic, just that little easier for you to do.

So there are a lot of tools and tricks of customization, it's very personal, the way that you end up doing it but let me give you some examples. Some people do it through body language, power poses. You know, I can tell you an interesting story I talk about in the book of a woman who was afraid to confront this jerk who was really undermining her in front of clients at work and she eventually got the courage up through her conviction to try to talk to this guy and really tell him off. And she told me that when she did before she even walked into his office was she walked back and forth in the hallway like -- I wish I could show you right now, I wish we were in person, like to -- just

like, she said, "I put my executive like walking style on," and she walked with a purpose like up and down the hallway multiple times.

She got up her courage, she walked in the door -- She didn't knock by the way, which is a nonverbal signal. She did not knock, in other words, no politeness. She closed the door then, again no politeness. She walked over to his desk, put her hands on his desk, right, in this sort of powerful position. And when I asked her about this I said, "What was that like power pose?" She said, "No I was afraid I was going to faint."

JORDAN: Ha, nice she's like, trying to keep from passing out by doing a super power kind of -- I'm imagining right -- both hands on the desks, spread far apart --

ANDY: Exactly.

JORDAN: -- so she's leaning right into his face, basically.

ANDY: Exactly, and then my point here is that -- is that she actually scripted it out and she used body language as a tool here to customize the way she was going to do this. Other people use props. You could wear a power suit, no one knows it but you're wearing a power suit. You might -- For years, I would wear a special ring. It was a ring that had a tiger's eye stone in it, which is a stone that my great uncle found on the beaches of the south pacific in World War II.

JORDAN: Wow.

ANDY: And he had it made into this ring, and I always admired it as a kid and then ultimately I found out what it represented and it always then represented courage to me and he eventually got dementia and his wife offered me the ring and I took it. I was so glad that -- to have it and when -- early in my career, I was afraid to give public speeches. You know, it was a long time ago but I really was afraid and I would wear this ring every single time. No one of course knew what it meant. I mean, now

all of you do. But it meant courage to me, and so it was sort of a prop that I would wear.

I have a student who told me this great story the other day. She's very self-conscious in social situations but she wants to be more comfortable and she happens to love photography and she had this epiphany that she could bring a selfie stick to social get-togethers and she tried and it was awesome for her because, you know she had a hard time starting conversations but it was again, like a prop or a tool that she brought to the situation and all of a sudden it kind of catalyzed conversations. People came over, they loved doing it, it was fun, they, you know, shared emails and so on and so -- I mean that's just an example but -- So you've got body language, you've got props -- sometimes you can, you know, stage the context even.

So if I give a speech, for example, sometimes I'll ask to do Q and A sessions instead of a formal speech or I'll go a little bit early so that I can meet a few people. So ultimately the speech isn't in front of a group of strangers, it's in front of strangers but I happen to know a couple of them. I mean I could go on and on but the point is is that there are many, many ways that people can make slight adjustments to a situation to make it just a little bit more comfortable, a little bit more personal, and that is a fantastic way to kind of get an edge when you're stepping outside your comfort zone.

JORDAN:

This is interesting. What about the idea of just forcing yourself to do it by basically stacking the deck against yourself and the example that I've given on the show before is when I was first starting to learn this stuff, I mean this is 10, 12 years ago, I decided, "I'm going to go out a bunch, because I'm going to put myself in social situations," because I was, you know, introverted and I knew I needed to get this networking thing handled so I went out. But what I was doing was -- and this was before you could check your phone -- I would go out and then I would kind of like hang out in the corner and be in a dark area and nurse my drink or talk to one person the whole time and -- that I met, that I felt comfortable around.

So I grabbed a Halloween costume, it was a kangaroo suit but it had no mask. Right, it was just like the body and a tail and a baby kangaroo in the pouch, and I wore that to places where you can't do it. I mean I wore it out in the town, I wore it to restaurants that were nice, I wore it to the bars that I was going to, and I wore it to jazz concerts, and what happened was people would always talk to me, so I could no longer hide. It wasn't really customizing it to make it more comfortable, it was making it impossible for me to stay in the comfort zone.

ANDY: That's a great example. I haven't heard other examples like that but it's -- I would call it a forcing mechanism in some ways, right?

JORDAN: Yeah.

ANDY: And you know, so you're forcing mechanism wasn't about going to the event, it was about forcing yourself to engage at the event.

JORDAN: Right.

ANDY: Other people create forcing mechanisms by agreeing to something or committing publicly. Usually if we commit publicly to something, there's more likelihood that we'll actually do it and so on. So, I think ultimately forcing mechanisms of some sort are pretty useful to have us make the leap. Just out of curiosity, how long did it take for you to kind of feel natural doing that or did you ever?

JORDAN: Yeah, so what happened was I wore the suit and I decided, "I'm going to wear this for the whole weekend." And then at the end of the weekend, I was going to go out without it and I thought, "You know, I'm still kind of nervous at the thought of going out without this," and so I wore for about, I don't know, 10 or 11 days. And then after that, I just -- one day I just kind of didn't feel like putting it on, and it wasn't for the reason that I didn't want to be social, it was just like I just felt like I didn't need it. I



went out and I was largely able to retain the idea that all these interactions were completely normal.

And so I just simply went out and instead of hiding and waiting for people to talk to me, I started more and more conversations and there was another ramp up period where I was the one that was actually starting the conversations. Because when I had the kangaroo suit on, usually I was just getting swarmed by people who were like, "What are you doing? This is hilarious!" that kind of thing. So it took me a while to then ramp up to that, it was a different skill set. But I would say, 10 or 11 days. Even now when I have to go somewhere and I have to wear something silly or if there's a bet or something like that, I will always take it and it's very easy for me. So this is a skill or a mindset that I got probably over 10 to 12 days that have stuck with me for as many years.

ANDY:

It's interesting I think what psychologists would say is that -- you know yours is a little bit different. Psychologists would talk about lucky charms. You know that people, kids even, might bring a lucky charm and start to attribute their success to the lucky charm, not to themselves, so attribute it externally instead of attributing it to their own abilities, their own capacities, right? And I guess that's the danger of something like a gorilla suit or a -- I mean a gorilla suit is a little -- a little bit -- an interesting example, or a lucky charm.

But, you know, there's also research that suggests that that's not the case. It's more like your story that what happens is at some point, you kind of realize in some level that the ability actually resides inside of you. And maybe that's not a conscious feeling but on some unconscious level, and then you're able to go off without it just as you did. And then you, you know, have some success and it gets solidified that it's actually you. So it's an interesting story.

JORDAN:

I think there's some of that. I think the point that maybe I didn't convey clearly enough was also the fact that it was forced exposure therapy. It wasn't just, "I need this suit

because then I'll look special and people will talk to me," it's, "I can't hide in a kangaroo suit at a fancy restaurant. It's actually impossible." The only reason I was even allowed in is because the manager and I were friends. Right, so it became just a way to get so many conversations going that I decided it wasn't scary to be the center of attention. I could have worn anything and I could have changed that thing every single day. There was no magic attached to the suit itself.

ANDY: Yeah. Interesting. I suspect that a lot of listeners would probably be terrified to wear a suit like that and that would make it even doubly difficult for them to ever possibly go into a situation like that, you know what I mean?

JORDAN: Yeah.

ANDY: Like I would imagine that when people talk about exposure therapy -- it's interesting for you it was almost like extreme exposure therapy. Usually it's like, you know, let's say you're trying to learn to be desensitized to snakes and you're afraid of snakes. Usually you'll think about a snake, look at a picture of a snake, watch a TV show about a snake, see a snake with someone else holding it. You know, it's like little, little stages. But you, you jump right in the pool and it's good it worked for you and it might work for some people. Again, I think what that points to is that this is a bit of an art. I mean there's some science behind it but it is a bit of an art.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: I didn't one day go, "I've been locked up in this law library for years, I'm going to go wear a kangaroo suit." It was -- there were a lot of baby steps. It was like, "I need to get some decent clothes. I need to go out and start being more social, I need to bring my usual crew of friends with me. Now I need to go out alone without my friends. Now I need to go out and stay for more than 20 minutes," right? Those were the baby steps, it wasn't just immediate kangaroo suit. So, I just want to be really clear.

ANDY: Right.

JORDAN: Because I think that's an important note, not even just the kangaroo suit example, but I think if someone's afraid of flying they have to go through the paces, they don't just put on like a wing suit and go jump off of a peak and go, "Now I can fly on airplanes." There's got to be these baby steps, otherwise you just scare yourself to the point where you never even want to think about moving in that direction again, which is counter productive.

ANDY: Yeah and it sounds like you also did what I'm talking about in terms of customizing, like when you said that you brought your friends, for example, right?

JORDAN: Right.

ANDY: So, you know, I think maybe the suit was part of your sort of ultimate steps of customizing but it sounds like you customized in other ways to lead up to that. So yeah, that's interesting.

JORDAN: So, all right we've got customization, so we can take those baby steps or we can take little steps or we can move in that direction. What else do we have in our arsenal?

ANDY: Yeah so the third thing, so basically it's conviction, it's that sense of purpose, it's customization, your ability to personalize it. And then the last is clarity. I did find in most stories, in most examples from people and also -- this is also true in cognitive behavioral research, that people when they're in situations outside their comfort zone, they tend to catastrophize, they look at the worst possible outcomes, fixate on those, and then use that as a reason to avoid.

So for example, if I'm going to give a speech, "I'm going to fail, I'm going to flop, I'm going to faint on stage, I'm going to die on stage or I'm going to just be a complete embarrassment so I'm

not going to do it." Or sometimes actually people go in the other direction and say, "I'm only giving a speech. It's not even worth it unless I'm like the best TED talker ever." And the point is that our anxieties and our fears drive our concerns, worries, and anticipations of the future into these extreme directions and so, what I've found was critical, was to at least start to try to claim some sort of, I don't know, middle ground -- normalized, realistic-ish middle ground, where, you know, you could say, "I probably won't be the best TED talker in the world and I probably also won't die on stage and be a total embarrassment. I might not be fantastic but I'll probably be better than I think and then next time around I'll probably improve." That sort of mindset was really essential for people. Now, not everyone had it immediately but at least early on to try to adopt that mindset, that became a real asset for people.

JORDAN: How do you try to adopt that mindset because it's more of a realistic mindset, but it can be really hard to do when we're busy catastrophizing or fantasizing I guess, which is the opposite? Because it's real easy to say, "I highly recommend you adopt a growth mindset," and it's a lot harder to actually do it.

ANDY: Yeah so it's true, I think that's actually a dilemma and I can't tell you that I have the perfect answer. What I try to help people with is give them some exercises. So for example, if you can actually literally write down -- sometimes it's helpful to write down the absolute worst extreme possible situation that you think is going to happen, and then to write down the absolute best idealistic possible situation that could happen. And then after that, write down what is probably the more realistic possible situation that could happen. And simply articulating those is sometimes helpful.

It's sometimes helpful to also place a bet on which one you think is most likely to occur, right? Like what are the chances that this like awful thing will happen and so on. And so, that's helpful I think for people to start to see. I think also sometimes it's helpful for people to realize that even if a particular

situation is well outside their comfort zone and they're scared to do it, that they've been there before. I think people underestimate how much throughout our lives, without even knowing it and realizing it, we step outside our comfort zones, you know, in a variety of ways, from elementary school to middle school.

And listeners probably can't remember that but I -- with kids that age, I know that's a major shift outside your comfort zone. And then to high school. If you've gone to college from high school to college. For your first job, like going from the world of a university as a student to then actually working, and having a boss and so on and then maybe taking on new roles, becoming a manager, managing people all of a sudden, switching careers, etcetera. Most of us have had a decent amount of -- maybe getting married? Asking someone on a date. I think with -- we have some situations and some capacities to draw upon so I do remind people about that and to think back at those situations, and then to sort of stress test this idea, this absolute worst case scenario against what you know you've done before. It's not perfect, but I think that these exercises can help.

JORDAN:

Yeah I think this is really interesting and a great idea. One thing that I guess I do. I hadn't thought about being an exercise and tell me what you think of this is -- I often go through those scenarios with somebody that I trust who's much more reasonable than me in that particular context. So I might tell my wife for example, "Hey I'm doing this," -- and very rarely do I have to think about the best scenario because I'm often doing that quite a bit anyway, but then when I think of, "Oh, what if this happens?" -- I know myself, I know I'm going to catastrophize at some level. I'll go through it with her and she'll be like, "Yeah, I mean think about that. What are the odds of that?, and I'm like, "Well okay." and she'll just poke holes in it.

You don't want to do this with a friend who's going to be more of a catastrophizer than you, because those are the people that go, "I got selected for a speech."

"Oh, God I wouldn't want to do that, what are you going to do? Are you going to do it?" You know you don't want that person on this particular exercise. But I think if you can find a reasonable friend who knows you well, and then they can poke holes in your catastrophization process, you can really let the steam valve open when you tell somebody, "This is what could possibly happen and the resulting consequences," and they go, "Yeah are you kidding me? That's ridiculous," and you start to go, "Oh, okay, I agree."

ANDY:

That's a great point. I totally agree with you and also I think one of the real keys is when you can start to laugh at yourself about it, as you almost did at the end there. I think that's really key because when you can start to like, "Oh, yeah, I guess you're right," you know what I mean, that kind of thing? That's when a supportive person like your wife or a close colleague or whatever, coach, mentor, therapist, can help you, you know? Sort of help you reclaim that middle ground and maybe even sort of chuckle at yourself, that's really key, if you can get there.

JORDAN:

So we identify our specific pain points around this particular topic, this particular stretch outside our comfort zone, basically our fears, and write them down, maybe share with somebody that you trust or some people that you trust. Make sure that they're not the people who are going to be more neurotic than you. And then, okay that's great. So we can attack some of our fears that way, what about separating the fears from the fact that we do the avoidance thing? Or does the avoidance issue take care of itself once the fears are alleviated a little bit?

ANDY:

I think what you're ultimately gearing up to with conviction, customization, clarity, and so on -- I think the goal here is to take the leap. You know that's where you go back to the question that you asked at the very beginning. Like, you know,

is this pseudoscience, is it just about, "Just go take a leap and so on." And I actually think there's some truth to that, that it is just take a leap, but the thing is is that, on the Internet and when you hear sort of like the Instagram meme of, "Just take a leap," what you don't have behind it is some compassion for why specifically it's difficult, like drilling down to the psychological challenges we talked about. You don't have the framework and the actual tools that you can use to work to take a leap. And as you described about your own situation, it takes some work to get there.

Ultimately you're going to take a leap but I think if people look at these memes and so on like, "Just take a leap." Frankly it's kind of demoralizing to me. It's like, "Oh, forget you, I can't take a leap, I'm terrified here," right? So what is powerful though, is if you can take the leap, what I've found is that you can start to discover things about yourself because without the leap you can't. If you take the leap, what people often discover -- Number one, is that, "This isn't as hard as I thought it was," and number two, "I'm a little bit better or more capable than I thought I was." And when you can start -- I just heard it so many times. If you can start to feel those things and experience those things from taking leap, not perfect in any way but some self-discovery there, it'll probably coax you away from avoidance and towards approaching and trying it again. You know if you have a little dial, you're probably on the approach side.

And then if you try it again, you're in this sort of virtuous spiral as opposed to a vicious spiral. The vicious spiral would be avoidance, right? You avoid it, it becomes even harder the next time, you avoid again, and so on and that just sort of keeps fear bubbling up. But if you can start and push yourself towards the trying it stage, the taking a leap stage, using the tools and techniques, you're in a much better place.

JORDAN:

This is great. Andy is there anything that I haven't asked you that you want to make sure that we cover here?

ANDY: No, I have really learned from you as well. I love your stories. I love the example, I'm going to borrow that example that you mentioned about the suit that you wore and also I think that the comment that you made about speaking with someone like your wife who's more sensible than you are in that moment -- I think that's a real critical resource, I'm really glad you brought that up.

JORDAN: Well my pleasure. I'm glad that we could make this particular program more of a collaboration. I mean the comfort zone thing is just a life changer for everybody who finally can articulate their fears, find out what the roadblocks are, and systematically attack those, instead of just having a general dread of things that make us feel a little tingly in the wrong way, right? And this for me has been great both socially, with my friends -- of course it was crucial to meeting my wife, crucial to starting my business, is the subject matter of the business that we run here at The Art of Charm in large part. I really appreciate you taking the time to come and discuss your expertise here with us.

ANDY: I really enjoyed it, thanks for having me.

JORDAN: This was a great one. There's a lot of actionable advice here, there's a lot of things to think about, frankly. Articulating those fears and roadblocks -- articulating those more clearly so that we can see what the actual hangup is, will definitely help us create a roadmap to getting outside our comfort zones, shedding our boundaries, and pushing ourselves in order to grow, so I love that. Great big thank you to Andy.

The book title is [Reach](#), we'll have that linked up in the show notes for this episode as well. If you enjoyed this one, don't forget to thank Andy on Twitter, we'll have that linked up in the show notes. And tweet at me your number one takeaway from Andy here. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. Remember, if you want to check out the show notes, tap your phone screen, they should pop right up.



Our boot camps, our live programs -- speaking of getting outside your comfort zone, this is a major deep dive. This is a week long getting outside your comfort zone with us as your coaches. You really can advance massively during that time and of course there's months of work before and after as well. But to see people become part of the AoC family, the growth they experience over the next month and years is really nothing short of amazing.

Remember we do sell out a few months in advance, so if you're thinking about it or you're curious, you should get in touch with us ASAP to get some info from us so you can plan ahead. That's at [theartofcharm.com/bootcamp](http://theartofcharm.com/bootcamp).

I also want to encourage you to join the AoC challenge at [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or you can text the word 'charmed,' C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444. That challenge is about, again, pushing yourself outside your comfort zone, networking, connection skills, inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional relationship with you.

And we'll also email you our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show, which includes some great practical stuff, ready to apply, right out of the box, on reading body language, charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. This will make you a better networker, a better connector, and a better thinker. That's [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or text 'charmed,' C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

For full show notes for this and all previous episodes head on over to [theartofcharm.com/podcast](http://theartofcharm.com/podcast). This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor. Show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty, theme music by Little People, transcriptions by [TranscriptionOutsourcing.net](http://TranscriptionOutsourcing.net). I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else either in person or

shared on the Web. Word of mouth is everything. So share the show with friends and enemies. Stay charming and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.



