

## THE GIFT FROM PLATO'S CAVE (L/C + 10% IN ACTION)



**WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU CAME  
OUT OF YOUR CAVE?**

It's one thing to listen to people share their valuable insights, ideas, strategies, and practices, but it is another to adopt them, put them into practice, and work toward integrating them into your winning routines and habits.

For a long time, I thought about the 100 people gathered at that conference. I was sure that more than a few of the audience would try at least one thing that the speaker shared. Even if that was the case, why didn't the new learning stick? Why do only a select few change their behaviour to create new habits? Why do the rest disregard important information given to them by successful people or why do they give up on what they have heard and revert to their previous behaviours?

This is my theory.

Imagine living your whole life in a cave of total darkness. One day, someone lets you out and you see that it's a beautiful, sunny day. What happens to your eyes?

You are temporarily blinded. It feels uncomfortable and it takes time for your vision to adjust to the light you've been unfamiliar with. You'll feel an undeniable urge to run back into the comfort of the cave. It is an environment you know and one that feels safe. There is no growth and no progress but at least it's familiar and at least you are in control.

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However, what happens when you resist this temptation? You hold your position in the sun and tolerate the initial discomfort. Your eyes adjust. After a few moments, you see a stunning vista ahead of you and no longer feel a desire to return to the dark, cold, and dingy cave. You want to move forward and explore. You see a better life ahead and want to move toward it, even though it's unfamiliar and new. You push through regardless.

Personal growth and development are the same. First, we need to move out of our comfort zone (the cave) and embrace the uncanny. Change is uncomfortable, so it's normal to try to explain why this new behaviour doesn't work, and immediately revert back to our old, average habits. However, when we keep working, testing, adapting, and persisting, our 'eyes adjust', and we establish a new and improved habit.

Be willing to make mistakes as you test and learn. Very early in my business career my then boss, Tony Schofield, the company's Managing Director, said to me, "The only people who don't make mistakes are the people who don't do anything." He encouraged me to live an action orientated life, be willing to give things a go and learn from them. He also said that when the time came for me to lead others, it was important I created an environment that encouraged others to do the same. The path to success involves mistakes.

When we are forced out from the cave, whether it be through the loss of a job or a failure of a business, we have no choice than to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. At these points, creating and improving winning habits are essential for progress and growth, or else the temporary blindness turns into anxiety, overwhelm, and a negative spiral that inhibits us from moving forward and reaching our ultimate potential.

But why do so many people wait until they are forced from the cave before they seek new and improved behaviours, habits, and routines? Surely, it is best to be in control and search for continuous improvement from a position of strength. Otherwise, complacency can become an unwanted companion. I see complacency as the first step to failure.