

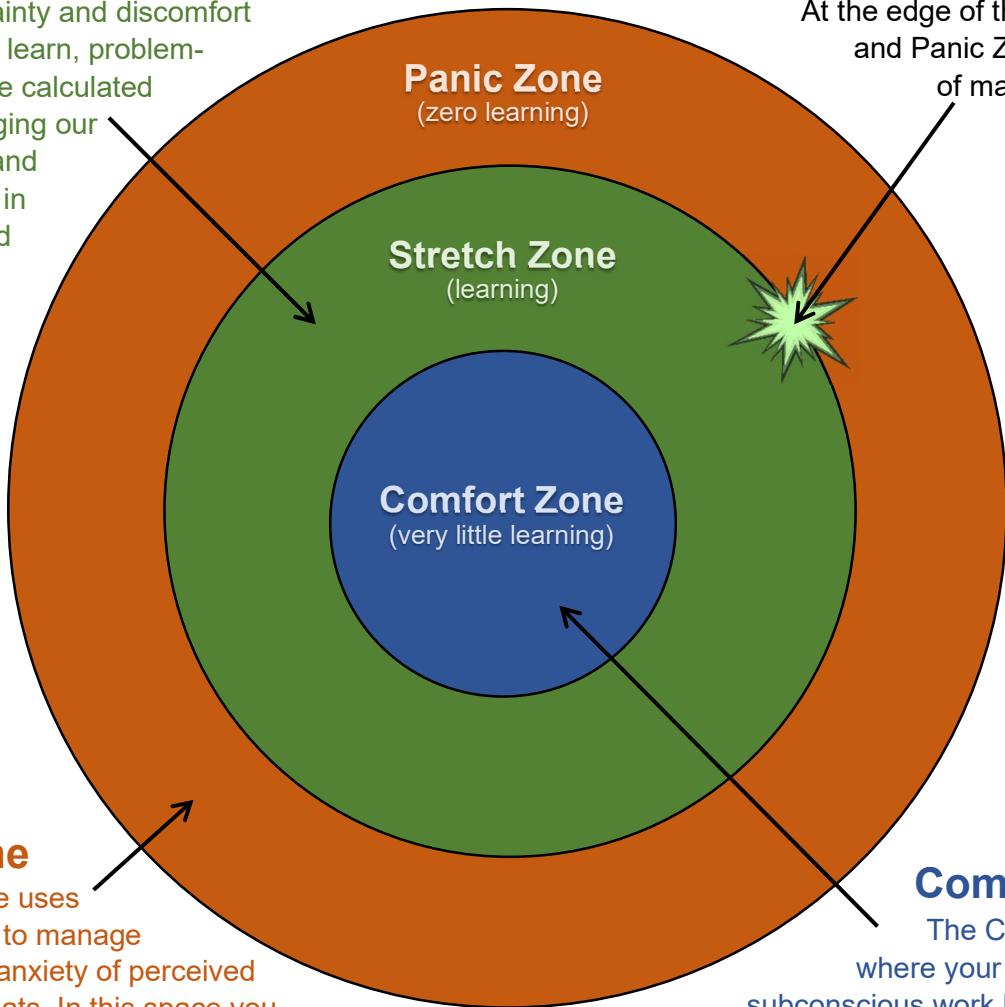
THE LEARNING ZONE

Stretch “Learning” Zone

The Stretch Zone (a.k.a. “Learning Zone”) is where learning and re-learning takes place. Uncertainty and discomfort motivate us to learn, problem-solve, and take calculated risks. Challenging our assumptions and beliefs results in intellectual and emotional growth.

Maximized Learning

At the edge of the Stretch Zone and Panic Zone is the point of maximum learning and growth.



Panic Zone

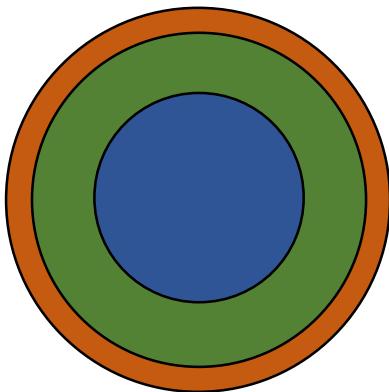
The Panic Zone uses all your energy to manage the stress and anxiety of perceived and/or real threats. In this space you have little capacity to access your prefrontal cortex and grow intellectually or emotionally. Learning is impossible.

Comfort Zone

The Comfort Zone is where your automatic and subconscious work happens. Your thoughts and emotions are on autopilot as you remain confident and are successful in your tasks.

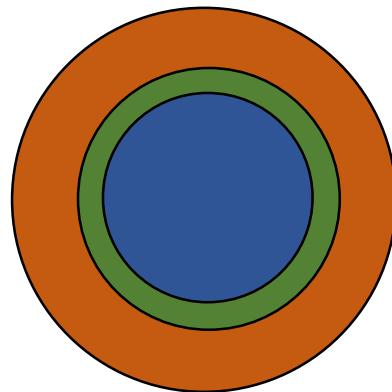
- ✓ The Learning Zone Model was developed by Tom Senniger (2000).
- ✓ Emotional Intelligence can play an important role in developing an ability to stretch.
- ✓ Spending time in the Stretch Zone increases comfort in those new experiences, allowing the Comfort Zone to expand.
- ✓ Both the Comfort Zone and Panic Zones are commonplace for judgements, assumptions and closed-mindedness. (Think Ladder of Inference!)

Everyone's comfort, stretch and panic zones are individual. They may also vary by situation or role. Here are four common patterns:

#1

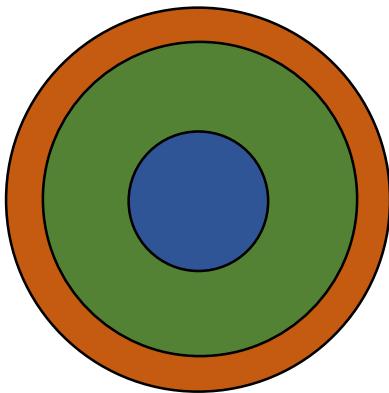
- ↑ Large knowledge and comfort base.
- ↑ Large capacity to stretch and grow.

This person often has substantial experience mixed with open-mindedness. They possess the continued ability to adapt and learn.

#2

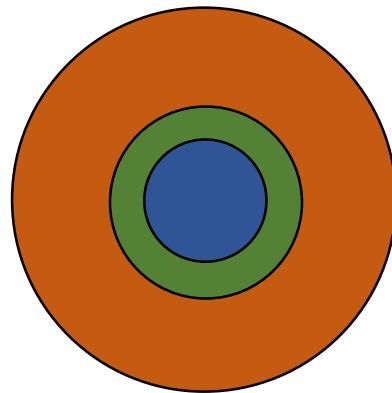
- ↑ Large knowledge and comfort base.
- ↓ Small capacity to stretch and grow.

This may be common with someone who has widened their comfort zone little by little over a long period of time.

#3

- ↓ Small knowledge and comfort base.
- ↑ Large capacity to stretch and grow.

This may be someone inexperienced who has high emotional self-awareness/self-control and a strong openness to evolve.

#4

- ↓ Small knowledge and comfort base.
- ↓ Small capacity to stretch and grow.

This is common for people who do not welcome discomfort or uncertainty, and as a result may be slow to evolve or grow.

Within systems of marginalization, it is common for dominant group members to follow *Pattern #4*. When the subject of privilege comes up, discomfort of the potential that they may not be a 'good person' keeps them from leaving their Comfort Zone and entering the Stretch Zone. The suggestion that the impact of their actions may have had an adverse on another person can easily send them into the Panic Zone, resulting in emotional denial and judgmental responses, e.g., "Are you calling me a RACIST!?"