

*This book is a critical look at the importance of discomfort and how to train to embrace it. Written through the use of non-fiction stories Lang effectively describes who and how people have used discomfort as a strength and why this is critical in our time of continuous change. The author shares big ideas for each chapter and addresses concepts such as pain, happiness, denial, mental strength, control, comfort, and change. These are all factors that people deal with on a regular basis, which makes this book a must read to succeed at work and with life circumstances.*

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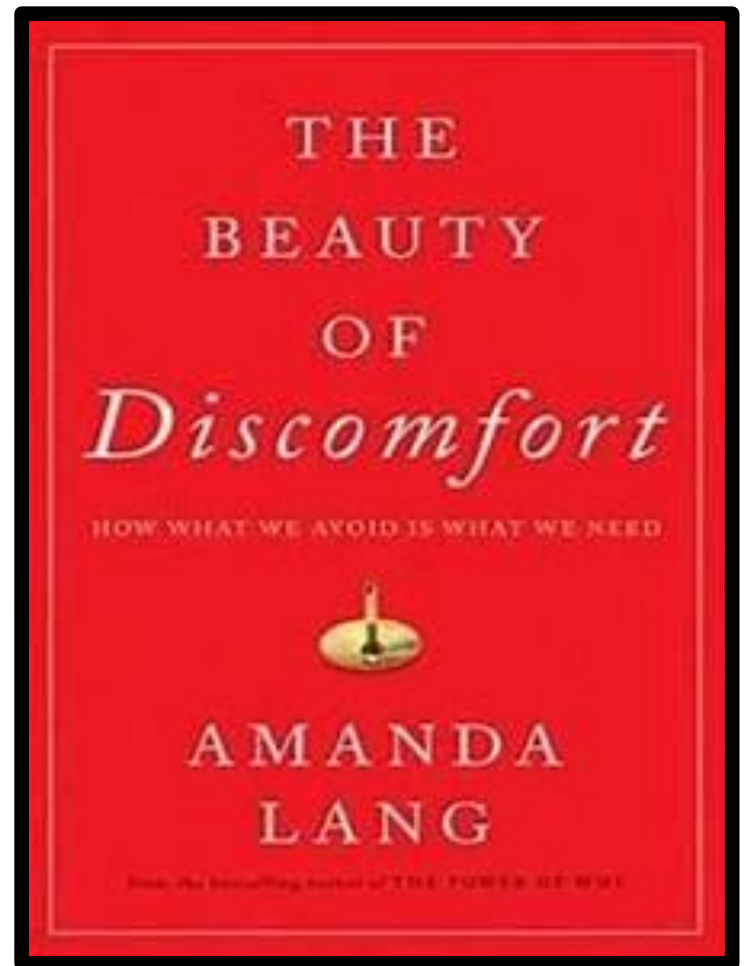
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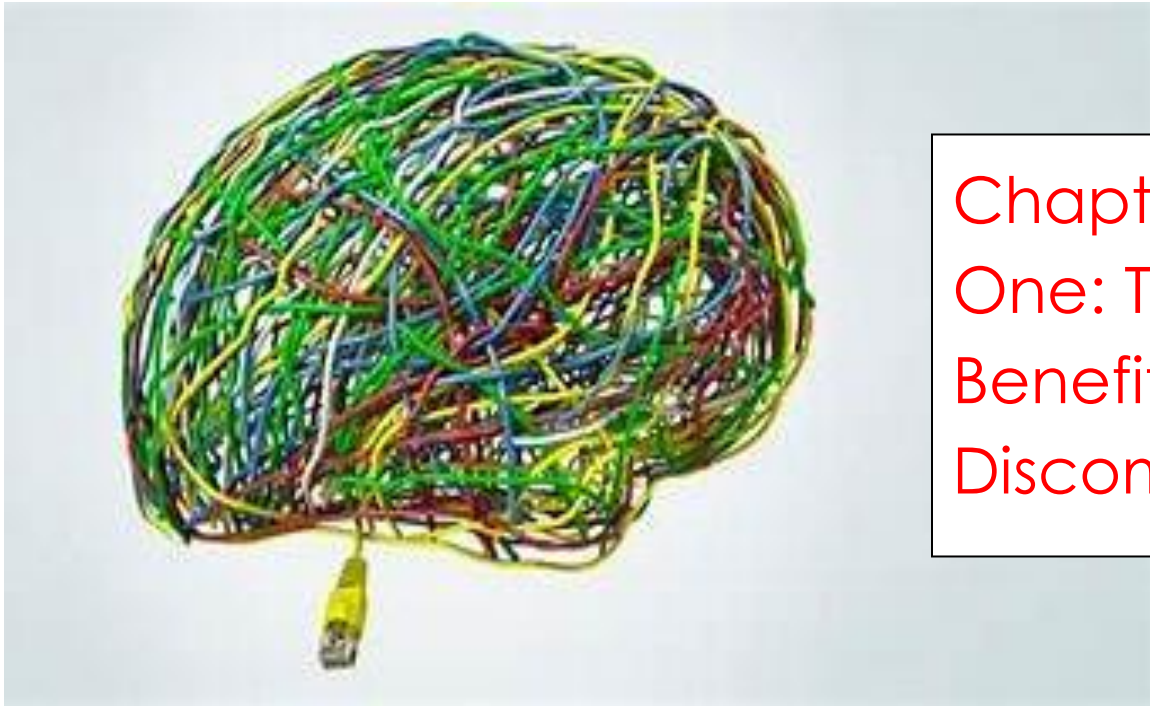
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## Questions for consideration:

1. How can we train ourselves to embrace discomfort?
2. How athletes seem to manage discomfort?
3. Why is discomfort important for people of all ages?
4. How can we embed discomfort at work?



## Chapter One: The Benefits of Discomfort



### **Big Ideas:**

- Discomfort is easier to tolerate when posed as a challenge
  - Human beings are wired to see comfort
- If success comes easily then it's less likely to be comfortable with discomfort
- Parents' desire to protect their children from suffering can lead to decreased confidence due to low coping skills and increased anxiety
  - When discomfort is absent children do not learn boundaries

### **We Need To.....**

- Learn to self identify discomfort triggers
  - Focus in on the discomfort to create comfort and familiarity with it
- Practice paying attention in the present moment
- Train ourselves to tolerate discomfort so change doesn't derail us

## Chapter Two: Reframing Discomfort



### Big Ideas

- We need to make the discomfort work FOR us by reframing it as a challenge
- Gaining control of discomfort is a sign of personal growth

### Thoughts on Pain

- Once thought of as linear, but now connected to triggers and perceptions in the brain
- Impacts many areas within the brain
- Is influenced by your state of mind, prior experiences, and future expectations
- Impossible to understand others pain due to complexity of influencers

**“When we reframe discomfort, either by associating it with something positive or by treating it as normal and even helpful, we engage the prefrontal cortex, our brain’s CEO, which can act as a top-down neurological commander to close the date on unbearable degrees of pain”**

~ Amanda Lang, *The Beauty of Discomfort*, p. 58.

## Chapter Three: The Mindset Factor



### Big Ideas

- Sincere gratitude creates a positive mindset
- View discomfort as temporary
- Believe your body will adapt and grow
- Avoid self-blame for discomfort
- Focus on the positives of discomfort

### Happiness

- Used to be thought of as a result
- Now linked to positive mindset
- Is viewed as ones' choice

### Gratitude Impact

- Improved communication, improved relationships, higher self-esteem, greater sense of self-worth, increased resiliency

*"The inverse of post-traumatic stress, post-traumatic growth is about turning adversity into positive psychological and emotional change."*

-Amanda Lang, *The Beauty of Discomfort*, pg. 78.



## The Role of Denial

- Can be another way to reframe discomfort
- Ignoring discomfort altogether removes it as a distraction
- Denying negativity is preferable to dwelling on it

“Freud argued that denial is a defense mechanism that allows us to ward off an external reality threatening our ego, or sense of self. Denial is not always bad, in other words, and can be a handy psychological tool that lets us ignore what we can't control and what would only hurt us.”

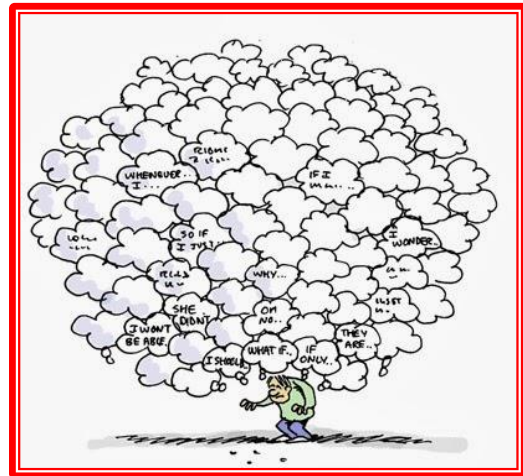
-Amanda Lang, *The Beauty of Discomfort*, p. 100.



## HOW DO YOU WIN PEOPLE OVER WHO WANT YOU TO FAIL?

Step 1: Depersonalize the criticism and don't allow the discomfort to exist on an emotional level

Step 2: Address discomfort logically to separate it from the emotional connections



**Rumination** – the art of dwelling on something by endlessly thinking about causes, implications, negative feelings

- has proven to be bad for us
- leads to a downward emotional spiral
- can increase anxiety and depression
- people do this as an illusion that they are dealing with an issue, but a solution is replaced by rumination thoughts

## Chapter Five: The Comfort of Control



### Big Ideas:

- the greater the discomfort the more perceived control is needed
- change can be something you choose or something uninvited (i.e. illness)
- the meaning we assign to the discomfort is important because mind trumps emotion and matter



### Mental Strategies to Control Discomfort

Avoidant – denial, ignore, distract

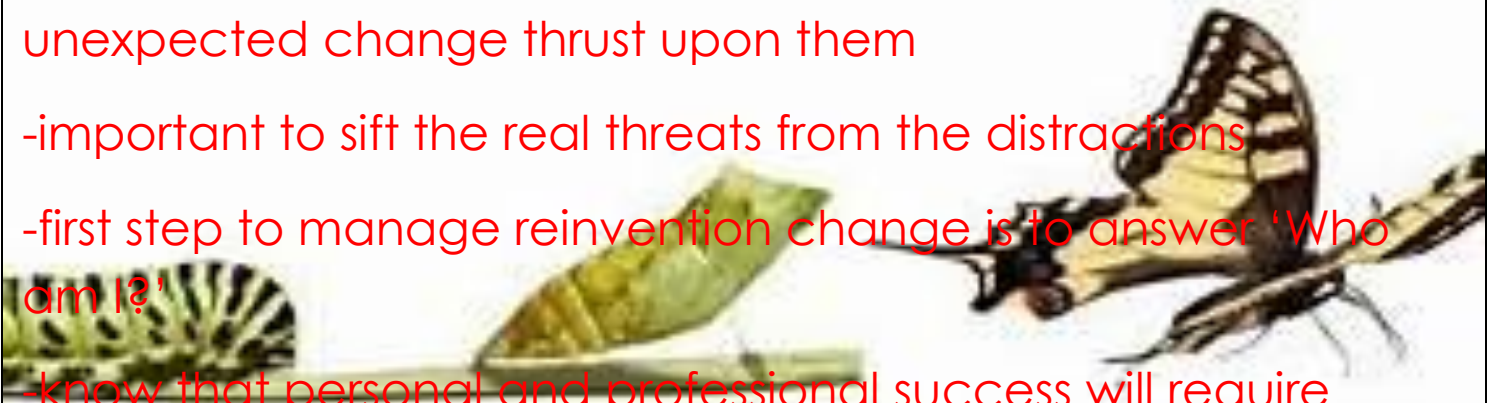
Non-avoidant – focus in on the discomfort to better control your reaction

**\*The best strategy to control discomfort is the belief that you have a strategy to manage it\***

## Chapter Six: The Discomfort of Reinvention

### Big Ideas:

- with loss of identify a reinvention is required
- prepare for discomfort because in life everyone has huge unexpected change thrust upon them
- important to sift the real threats from the distractions
- first step to manage reinvention change is to answer 'Who am I?'
- know that personal and professional success will require change



*'Anxiety really is the enemy of progress and basically shuts the gate on learning.'*

-Amanda Lang, The Beauty of Discomfort, p. 189

### Big Ideas on

#### Mental Toughness:

- athletes who are mentally tough CHOOSE to bounce back
- uses failure as motivation
- requires belief in self and resilience
- need to persevere through doubt and discomfort
- will teach you that you CAN cope with discomfort

### Big Ideas:

- it is human nature to prefer the certain..... but nothing new comes from the certain
- crisis can provide an opportunity to embrace ambiguity
- educate yourself as a tool to push through the discomfort of not knowing
- anxiety decreases the opportunity to learn
- people shy from entrepreneurship because of the ambiguity

## Chapter Eight: The Discomfort of Ambiguity



“In some ways, making a change when you don’t really have to is the hardest change to make. It’s easier, and certainly feels less risky, to succumb to the cozy allure of comfort. Things are going so well! But sometimes the biggest risk is not taking one at all.”

-Amanda Lang, *The Beauty of Discomfort*, p. 209.

### How to resist the lure of comfort:

- Consider comfort a trap
- Consider comfort as something which causes harm
- Understanding change is a process and won’t feel comfortable over night



### Stages of Change

**Pre-contemplation:** unaware of the need to change

**Contemplation:** process of weighing pros and cons but still no action

**Preparation:** establish intentions and create a plan for change, possibly some change behaviours begin

**Action:** change plan implementation, with a great plan comes greater chance of actualization

**Maintenance:** change has occurred once sustained, overconfidence can lead to relapse





### Big Ideas:

- employ empathy to consider other points of view to manage discomfort
- find deep meaning to rationalize uninvited discomfort
- adopt the mindset that the challenge will make you grow and become stronger

### Strategies to Deal with Discomfort

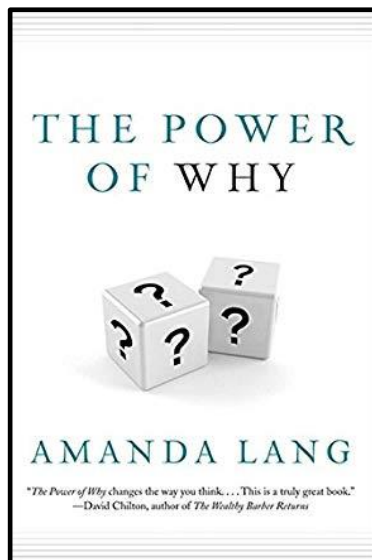
- Reframe the feeling as something positive
  - Create a sense of control over the discomfort
- Lean into discomfort to turn it into something familiar to embrace
- View discomfort as an opportunity to grow
  - Outright reject the feelings of discomfort

*If you cannot tolerate discomfort, you cannot get better at things that are difficult. You cannot achieve your own goals. You cannot grow.*

-Amanda Lang, *The Beauty of Discomfort*, p. 14

## About the author:

Amanda Lang is a Canadian author and award-winning business journalist. She has been covering business stories for the past twenty-five years and has worked with Bloomberg North, The National, and The Exchange with Amanda Lang. She currently resides in Toronto, Ontario and can be followed at [twitter@AmandaLang](https://twitter.com/AmandaLang)



## Reference

Lang, A. (2017). The beauty of discomfort. Toronto, Ontario: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

## Other Books by Amanda Lang

The Power of Why



Critique: This book provides excellent rationale to anyone thinking a little discomfort is not only good, but helpful. Applications to the workplace can be seen through evidence of successful reinvention, athletes who overcome setbacks, and parents who are wanting to give their kids the best opportunity in life through allowing their children to experience discomfort. This book is a great read for ages 10-100!

*"When kids aren't pushed out of their comfort zone and encouraged to try new things – whether it's zucchini or a new way of holding a baseball bat – they miss the opportunity to learn, not just about the world but about themselves and their own capacity to change."*

-Amanda Lang, *The Beauty of Discomfort*, p. 13.

