



Stepping onto the Stage: Breaking Out of the Comfort Zone

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At recent university events, it has been encouraging to see students stepping forward to take on the role of Master of Ceremony (MC). On the surface, hosting may appear straightforward—there is a clear flow, a prepared script, and a defined structure to follow. Yet, for many students, standing in front of dozens or even hundreds of people requires a significant amount of courage. It is not simply about reading lines, but about maintaining composure, delivering with clarity, and projecting confidence.

One student shared that she initially hesitated to sign up, as public speaking was not her strength. “My first thought was, what if I make a mistake?” This concern is common. When faced with something unfamiliar, many students instinctively focus on the possibility of failure. Despite this, she chose to try. During rehearsals, her voice trembled and her pace was slower than intended. With repeated practice, she gradually became more familiar with the flow, and her delivery grew more natural. On the day of the event, although still nervous, she completed her role successfully and later reflected, “It was not as daunting as I imagined.”

Her experience highlights an important insight: the real challenge often lies not in the task itself, but in our perception of the unknown. The comfort zone feels safe because it is predictable. Within familiar environments, we feel in control and the pressure of making mistakes is reduced. However, remaining within that space for too long can limit growth. When students step forward to host events, lead discussions, or present in class, they enter a different mode of learning—one that moves beyond understanding into application.

Observing these students, three key reflections emerge for young people:

1. Growth begins with a single step forward

Opportunities are often present—in hosting, leading, competing, or sharing perspectives. The real difference does not lie in ability, but in the willingness to step forward. Taking that first step opens up new areas for learning.

2. Confidence is built through experience, not assumption

Many students anticipate mistakes before taking action. In practice, things often turn out better than expected. Each experience contributes to a growing sense of internal stability. Confidence does not come from never making mistakes, but from being able to carry through despite uncertainty.

3. Capability is developed in moments of uncertainty

Even with preparation, live situations are unpredictable. When students learn to respond calmly, adjust their pace, and navigate unexpected moments, they develop essential workplace capabilities—adaptability and communication. These are not skills that can be fully acquired in a classroom; they are built through experience.

A Practical Framework: STEP (Start – Try – Evaluate – Progress)

To make this more actionable, students can adopt a simple approach when stepping outside their comfort zone:



- **Start:** Say yes to a small opportunity, even if it feels uncomfortable.
- **Try:** Engage fully in the experience, focusing on learning rather than perfection.
- **Evaluate:** Reflect on what went well and what could be improved.
- **Progress:** Apply these insights to the next opportunity, building gradually.

This cycle reinforces growth through action, rather than waiting for readiness.

In conversations with employers, it is often emphasised that beyond technical knowledge, qualities such as communication, collaboration, and a willingness to take initiative are equally valued. The ability to step outside one's comfort zone is, in itself, a critical capability.

The comfort zone is not inherently negative—it provides stability and a sense of security. Yet, to expand one's possibilities, there are moments when stepping beyond it becomes necessary. For those students who have stood on stage, they may still remember the nerves, but more importantly, they will remember the decision to take that step. Growth, more often than not, begins in exactly that moment.