
Some of the Strangest and Most Elusive Creatures on Earth

Today, I will be exploring some of the strangest and most elusive creatures on Earth; the angler fish with its translucent teeth, the cookie cutter shark with its suctional lips, and the *Idiacanthus atlanticus* with its pelvic fins. Of course, I am talking about deep sea fish. Ladies and gentlemen, my message is short and simple; we need to learn from deep sea fish. Allow me to explain. To start off, let's take a look at the characteristics of a deep-sea fish. Because of the poor level of light reaching deep-sea environments, many deep-sea fish have adapted their eyes to work in pitch-black. At 10 meters below the water, the pressure doubles; at 20, the greatness is thrice more than on the surface. But this is no problem for them, as their gelatinous bodies are not easily compressed. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that we should mutate our DNA, become gelatinous, and develop eyes suitable for the dark.

What I am trying to get across is maybe, like our friends at the bottom of the ocean, we need to learn how to make pressure a friend and be comfortable with change. Because that is the only way we can survive the pressures that come with living in a constantly changing society. A star boxer drops his right hand in the middle of a left hook; an aspiring actor forgets his lines; a president of the United States sends a tweet defending Breitbart News. Each of these people have suffered the same hurdle in mental processing: they have just panicked under pressure. We all know this too well. Your heart starts to beat faster, your breathing quickens, and adrenaline rushes through your veins as you carefully plan how to use those 140 characters. Stress faces everyone every day whether we like it or not. So, how about instead of responding to pressure with so much physical and mental negativity, we view it as an advantage.

Ever wonder why some people thrive under pressure while other people seem to crumble? Well how did Kobe Bryant score 81 points in a single NBA game? How did Elon Musk literally launch SpaceX off the ground? And how did Genghis Khan conquer China? Well, according to Martin Turner, a lecturer for Staffordshire university, it all depends in the way we initially respond to stress. That first assessment of the situation is critical. Some people are able to respond in a manner that helps their performance, also known as a challenge state, whilst others crumble into dust. I am the latter. But the good news for me and all the rest of you, who like me, just can't cope, is that the challenge state can be learned, simply through changing your perception. Stress is only harmful if you perceive it as harmful.

Kelly McGonigal, a health psychologist, discovered a startling research find. She conducted a study with 30,000 people in America, asking who thought stress was detrimental to their health. The astonishing data showed that people who believed stress was normal, though experiencing a lot of it, were the least likely to die. Researchers estimate that over the past 8 years, 182,000

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Americans have died prematurely from simply believing stress was harmful. This means that believing stress is harmful, has caused more deaths in America, than HIV, homicide, and skin cancer. We clearly need to change the way we think about our response to stress, through learning to view it as an advantage. That pounding and burning heart, is simply preparing you for action. The quicker breathing is no problem; it just means more oxygen is going to your brain. That adrenaline pumping through you, is simply improving your reaction time. But, just as important as being able to survive under pressure, is the ability to change and adapt. I mean, take a look at Kodak, who became myopic and failed to ask the right market questions, and therefore, couldn't adapt to the requirements of the consumer. Or blockbuster, who resisted to enter the online revolution because they believed that staying loyal to the business plan that brought them millions in the past, would continue to bring them just as much. Or, blackberry. I mean, they weren't called "crackberries" for nothing.

But even though their rise to the top was spectacular, so was their fall. Because they failed to predict the change that would come with the smartphone revolution. All of these companies dissolved with a common ground. They all failed to evolve with a constantly changing world. And in this world, being static is being left behind. Something we often forget is that adaptation does not only protect against negative impacts, but also makes us better in taking advantage of any benefits. Look at the film world, for example. Have you ever tried watching the 1933 version of King Kong? It's exhausting. A giant hairy beast standing on The Empire State Building couldn't even keep my mind from wandering, because each scene was simply too long. Luckily, the film world understood that a short attention span is part of human condition. So, they took advantage of the advancing technology to create shorter shots that would sustain a viewer's attention for longer. They saw an opportunity to evolve, and they took it, and I think it's safe to say that we all benefited from it.

Deep sea fish learned how to become glow in the dark in a unlit environment in order to attract mates. How cool is that? If only it were that easy in real life. They adapted and learned how to live with oil-filled bladders to control their buoyancy. And they learned how to grow teeth in their throats to further digest the little crustaceans available to them. They adapted with nature's desires and they got the benefit of it, they didn't die out. There will come a time in life, many times in fact, where that unwillingness to change will hold you back. But like it or not, we live in an intricate and chaotic world. It's as true of microscopic particles as it is of macroscopic institutions. Conforming may help you survive, but learning to adapt is the way to prosper in an ever-changing world. Ladies and gentlemen, if you're going to take anything away from this speech, I hope it's this: stress is only an enemy if you make it one, and the only way to improve this never-ending relationship, is through improving your perception of it. And this constantly transforming society we live in, will not wait. Adaptation is the key to flourishing in this dynamic world.

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Learn to create change, before change creates you. Pressure can turn poop into diamonds or diamonds into dust. It can also turn bony plates into some of the most resilient and complex species on earth. What's it gonna be? The choice is yours. Thank you.

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