

# THE UN-COMFORT ZONE

With Robert Wilson



## What's The Worst That Can Happen?

"Who wants to give their oral report first?"  
Asked Mrs. Davis, my sixth grade teacher.

The dreaded day had finally arrived when each of us would have to stand in front of the room and speak to the class. The butterflies in my stomach were flapping a tornado.

Not a single hand went up. In fact, there was no movement in the room at all. There wasn't a desk creaking under the shifting weight of a single body, no paper rustling, no pencils scratching, not even a cough. Nothing. The room had never been quieter. Every kid was sitting as still as a statue. The anxiety in the classroom was palpable.

"If someone doesn't volunteer, then I will start picking you at random."

Every student suddenly wished for invisibility. I saw a few heads bow in the hopes of achieving it. But, mostly I saw wide-eyed fright - the deer in the headlights look - predominate the room.

She started scanning the room and said, "Okay, then I'll choose..."

I couldn't take it anymore; I just wanted to get it over with. Almost involuntarily, my hand shot up. Then to my surprise, unexpected benefits started coming my way immediately.

Mrs. Davis began praising me for my courage. She said that I would set the standard by which everyone following me would be judged. Her praise gave me instant confidence, and I could feel the nervousness melt

away. I stood before the class and delivered my report with authority and self-assurance. I then got to sit down and relax, and enjoy everyone else's presentation without the fear that I would be called on next.

It was a seminal moment - a life changing experience - I discovered that being bold could have enormous rewards. It was a lesson I have carried ever since.

A few years would pass before I tested my boldness again. I was interested in student government in high school, and on several occasions ran for office. Each time, however, I chose to run for the lesser offices and each time I lost. My last opportunity to run came at the end of eleventh grade. This time I threw all caution to the wind and went after the big prize: President of the Student Council.

I won. As a result I enjoyed a full year of confidence building responsibility. The rewards I enjoyed for that moment of daring were enormous. I went from being just another kid in the school to being treated like an adult by the teachers and administra-

tion. It opened more opportunities than I could have imagined.

Tennis star, Billie Jean King, once said, "Be bold. If you're going to make an error, make a doozy, and don't be afraid to hit the ball."

I have also learned that when you go for the big prize, you will not face a lot of competition. I'm not saying the competition isn't tough - there just aren't as many competitors. That's true in business too. Go for the higher paying job. Pitch your product to the biggest client. Ask the most beautiful girl or handsome guy for a date.

Emily Dickinson said, "Fortune befriends the bold." So, the next time you have an opportunity to take a bold step, ask yourself this, "What's the worst that can happen?" Then go for it!

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