





# **DEFY** **CEDRIC DUMONT** **GRAVITY**

**How to break free  
from boundaries  
and limiting beliefs**

Lannoo  
Campus

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*Elevate your  
consciousness  
to reclaim your life.*

# The things that hold us back

Are you addicted to comfort and unwilling to change? Then this book isn't for you. If you're hooked on instant gratification, this book won't do you any good either—unless you want to free yourself from that urge. If you want to look back with regret at all the things you didn't do, then this book isn't for you. You'd be better off reading something that reinforces your doubts and keeps you safely away from bold choices. Regret over missed opportunities is the price you pay for your desire for certainty. That's the price tag of regret: only when it's too late do you realise you haven't followed the path you truly wanted.

In my first book, 'Dare to jump', I wrote about building up courage and daring to take action. How do you deal with fear? How do you develop the skills needed to take that daring leap? It was about cultivating the right mindset—breaking through limiting beliefs and daring to dream big. In this new book, I invite you into my laboratory for high-stakes dream making. To make our dreams come true and rise above ourselves, we must focus on five key points:

- 1.** We know the path but don't follow it.
- 2.** Mental obstacles hold us back.
- 3.** Aggressive comfort makes us weak.
- 4.** Pleasure is not the same as fulfilment.
- 5.** Dare to challenge yourself.

The traits and skills needed to achieve your goals are not some well-kept secret. That information can be found in hundreds of books and thousands of articles. Anyone who's been paying

attention knows the way. So why don't we follow it? Why do we fail to make progress? What causes us to stray, keeping us from ever reaching our goals?

Everyone knows how to lose weight, yet actually starting—let alone sticking with it—is incredibly difficult. Every smoker knows smoking is bad for their health, yet they keep lighting up those cancer sticks. We know the way to more and better, but we don't take it. Often, we don't do what we want or need to do because mental obstacles hold us back. Most of the time, we aren't even aware of them—they exist in our subconscious. Many behaviours are deeply ingrained, whether through our genes or our upbringing.

Why are so many people afraid of those who speak a different language or have a different skin colour? Because we instinctively trust people who look and speak like us, while seeing outsiders as a potential threat to our own tribe. Even people in our own country who dress differently from the norm can make us suspicious. And we, too, fear social judgement: the fear of being cast out of the group is powerful. In prehistoric times, that meant death. Without your tribe, survival was much harder.

Today, we still feel the need to belong to a group, but we no longer have to fight a real survival battle. Ironically, it's not scarcity but an overdose of comfort that's killing us. In the case of lifestyle diseases, this is quite literally true. In our comfortable environment, we live with a lack of intention. As much as 95 percent of what we do and think happens on autopilot. We no longer need to make an effort to survive, so we end up being lived. Only when you make conscious choices do you regain control over your own life.

Ironically, all our modern comfort does not bring peace of mind. Since 1987, depression and anxiety disorders have increased by 400 to 500 percent. Is this increase because we're more open about mental health, or are these conditions truly on the rise? Either way, there is now a lot of attention given to mental health and emotional well-being. It is a good thing that mental health

problems can be discussed openly. At the same time, I believe that this focus on mental well-being actually increases anxiety. After all, mental well-being is not achieved by avoiding all possible problems but by learning to deal with them in the right way.

I am convinced that excessive comfort does not make people happy. If you're never challenged and never dare to step outside your comfort zone, you become a slave to your need for control. You want certainty at all times, in all situations, shielding yourself from every possible risk. But the result isn't greater peace of mind—it's actually more anxiety. Do I really have everything under control, or will unexpected surprises still arise? Human evolution didn't take place in a safe, controlled environment—danger could appear at any time, anywhere. Ultimately, as humans, we are primarily programmed to survive and reproduce. The rest, genetically speaking, is of secondary importance. All our dreams, ambitions, and creative drives are merely side effects.

Our brains are adapted to surviving in the wilderness, not to the endless comfort with which Western society surrounds itself. That's why I believe a healthy dose of stress is actually good for our mental well-being. A little pressure makes us more resilient. However, many people go so far in their pursuit of mental peace that they can no longer handle negative feedback or setbacks. Every minor conflict feels like a catastrophic upheaval. Companies are already noticing how young employees quit at the slightest conflict, seemingly because they can't handle rejection. But rejection is simply part of life. The problem isn't rejection itself—it's our relentless craving for comfort. That's why I call it aggressive comfort.

I truly believe that a bit of stress is necessary to be productive and creative. Challenges force you to push yourself further. A company or society without challenge doesn't work. Such an organisation lulls itself to sleep or gets pushed aside by more assertive competitors.

*Disruption is the new normal.* In 2020, COVID-19 spread across the globe, and the entire planet went into lockdown—a world first. We had never experienced anything like it. Once the worst waves of the pandemic subsided, the conflict in Ukraine erupted. Energy prices skyrocketed, and inflation eroded the purchasing power of many households. The economy struggled to stay afloat. Meanwhile, violence flared up again in the Middle East. Suddenly, we were living from one crisis to the next.

Are you longing for the calm waters of the past? Hate to pop your comfort balloon, but the world is not peaceful. It never was. The world is volatile, complex, and uncertain. In Western Europe, we may have briefly indulged in the illusion of stability, but it didn't last long. There's no point in hoping things will return to the way they used to be—because even in the past, we simply lived from one crisis to the next. Crisis isn't the exception—it's the rule. War, economic downturns, pandemics, disruptive technological developments like artificial intelligence—new threats are constantly emerging. There's no use in being startled every time. The real question is: how do you deal with it? How do you adapt to new circumstances?

*Let's take it a step further.* Adapting deserves credit, but you don't just want to survive—you want to achieve something. It's not our circumstances that hold us back from making our dreams come true; it's how we respond to them. The things that keep us from moving forward exist mostly in our minds. That's why it's important to name them. Maybe you'll recognise some of these roadblocks in your own life:

- Lack of accountability
- Limiting beliefs
- Fear of failure
- Outdated social norms
- Insecurity

- Lack of consistency
- Complacency

Obstacles like these prevent you from walking your own path. However, as you'll come to see, the most difficult path can also bring the greatest sense of fulfilment. Realising your full potential is a lifelong journey, not a quick trip you can just complete. There is no point where you'll say, 'Now I've achieved everything'. No, the road twists and turns endlessly, and the most important thing is that you keep growing.

The goal is to become so good at what you do that no one can ignore you. That's what this book is about. Countless obstacles will stand in the way of your progress. The key is to recognise and understand them—only then can you overcome them. That's why, in this book, I take a deeper look at the types of obstacles you'll encounter on your path and how they hinder your personal growth. The good news? Overcoming an obstacle helps you grow.

'What doesn't kill you makes you stronger' is a massive cliché—and often, it's simply not true. People with post-traumatic stress disorder, for example, don't feel stronger. But if an intense experience doesn't leave you traumatised, it can make you stronger. Failure isn't that big of a deal—you die a little inside, but then you get back up. And in the end, you're going to die for real someday anyway, so why be afraid of only dying a little? Slam into a wall, acknowledge your failure, and pull yourself back up.

I personally practice a dangerous discipline: base jumping. I've seen people get injured. I've even lost friends. Each time, it's a shock. But at the same time, experiencing something like that teaches you to put things into perspective. That's the biggest lesson my sport has taught me—how to see the bigger picture and keep things in perspective. It keeps me connected to my own mortality.

Seeing problems as challenges and turning risks into opportunities—yes, it sounds like empty corporate jargon, but that's what

it comes down to. Hiding in your comfort zone won't make fear disappear. Step out into the world instead and discover your own path. If this mindset works in the extreme environment of my sport, where the smallest mistake can cost you your life, then you can apply it just as well in an everyday setting.

I'm taking you on a personal and practical journey through the largely unexplored territory of peak performance and optimal consciousness. If you're not yet familiar with the concepts of peak performance and flow hacking, I strongly recommend reading my first book as well. Come, let's embark on our journey. I want to show you that living in uncertain times is nothing to fear. In fact, there is a powerful connection between discomfort, growth, fulfilment, and happiness. To give you a glimpse of what's ahead: discomfort makes you happier than you think. It leads to a deep sense of fulfilment in your life.

Don't let your thoughts or your environment drag you down. Rise above it all—defy gravity.

Cedric Dumont  
Summer 2025





1

**The  
aggressive  
danger  
of comfort**



*Get comfortable  
with being  
uncomfortable!*

The modern comfort we enjoy today is our greatest source of problems. In our pursuit of comfort, we seek physical ease and avoid unpleasant situations. Unfortunately, we are doing ourselves no favours. In fact, there is a strong correlation between comfort and depression, anxiety disorders, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and cancer. Comfort is more dangerous than the imaginary threats we fear so much.

It's new experiences that actually improve our mental well-being. Challenges, no matter how difficult, keep both our bodies and minds fit and sharp. For thousands of years, every new day was a challenge for humans. As a species, we evolved to survive in a hostile world, and you can still see this today when war breaks out. In Ukraine, people paradoxically felt happier after the Russian invasion than they did before. During wartime, the number of depression cases actually drops by 40 percent. The explanation? We are wired to confront challenges.

After the 9/11 attacks, the happiness levels of Americans also rose. That may sound shocking, and to be clear, I am not advocating bloodshed to boost global happiness. But the fact remains: a major event tends to have a positive rather than a negative effect on our well-being.

The attack on the World Trade Center in New York brought the United States together. Americans suddenly felt a deep connection with one another. 'We are one people, we are united, and we will support each other,' was the prevailing sentiment.

Such a deep connection generates an intense feeling of happiness. You feel united with your people, bound by shared values. You become part of something greater than yourself.

Our nomadic ancestors had to search for food and shelter every waking moment. Only relatively recently did humans settle into permanent communities and experience comfort. We built shelters that lasted, and with the advent of agriculture, we always had

food at hand. With technological advancements, our comfort only grew. And now, in 2025, we spend most of our days sitting comfortably in a chair. Because we don't move enough, we pay for gym memberships and fitness programmes to compensate for an entire day of sitting. It sounds almost too absurd to believe, yet it's the harsh reality.

In some ways, life has become easier, but all that comfort is turning against us. Yet, despite all this comfort, we're not exactly jumping for joy. The number of burnout cases rises every year. More people are anxious and depressed than ever before. Since 1987, when the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) approved the antidepressant Prozac®, the rate of depression in the U.S. has increased by 400 percent.

Other prosperity-related diseases are also on the rise. For example, Alzheimer's diagnoses are expected to triple compared to current levels. What's driving this increase? Part of the explanation lies in our sugar-laden, high-fat diet—excess weight is harmful to the brain as well. A grim reality, considering that 70 percent of men are overweight. Thirty percent are even classified as obese. Additionally, half of the Western population now has diabetes or is in a pre-diabetic stage.

We cannot separate the rise of neurological and mental disorders from our lifestyle; the two are interconnected. Our comfortable way of life is proving to be extremely unhealthy in many ways. The solution? Step outside your comfort zone more often. A little discomfort actually leads to greater fulfilment.

## **A positive mind in an uncertain world**

Despite all our comforts, the world is still dangerous and unstable. Pretending otherwise won't change that. But don't focus on it too much. If you only look at the negative and the threats around you,

you risk paralysing yourself. You'll retreat even deeper into your comfort zone.

COVID, Ukraine, Gaza—we seem to be stumbling from one crisis to the next. What happened to our peaceful, steady existence? Disruption has suddenly become the new normal. And while we're still processing today's shocks, artificial intelligence is looming larger on the horizon. Whose job will be safe tomorrow? The algorithms will replace us! Is there anything AI won't be able to do? How can we, as humans, still make a difference? Can you become so good at what you do that no one can ignore you?

There's another way to look at it. Perhaps artificial intelligence will create new jobs and steer the economy in a different direction. AI could just as easily simplify your work rather than make it obsolete. Maybe it's more of an ally than a threat.

Ask yourself: How are you making a difference today? Through your skills, your mindset, and your courage? That will always be the case. The demand for creative minds will never disappear. Emotional intelligence, too, will always be highly valued.

Geertrui Mieke De Ketelaere, Director of Artificial Intelligence at the research centre Imec, points out that current AI models lack context and have no overarching story to tell. That's something humans can do. So how do you make a difference? By reading a book, for instance—maybe even this book—and drawing valuable lessons from it.

However, when you watch the news, it's all too easy to lose hope. The world is doomed anyway—why even bother with something positive? Doomscrolling is incredibly tempting when the television news shapes your worldview. Our human brain seems hardwired to see everything through a negative lens. Once you start down that path, you only notice what could go wrong. And suddenly, you see that a lot can go wrong.

Our brains aren't tuned to opportunities—they're wired for threats. But once you understand that, you can counteract it. Start

by turning off the TV and ignoring news websites. I am fully aware that we're living from crisis to crisis, but I avoid the news at all costs. Precisely because you have no control over all these large and small disasters, there is no point in keeping up with the news.

By definition, the news is overwhelmingly negative—it's about wars, diseases, and economic downturns. Throw in some traffic accidents, political deadlocks, and the occasional murder, and there you have it. If I asked you to name three negative news stories from the past year, you could probably rattle them off instantly. Easy. But positive news? Wait, was there any positive news at all?

All that bad news makes you feel like a mere pawn in the hands of powerful institutions and global forces. It convinces you that your own actions don't matter. And that kind of thinking is convenient—it allows you to blame external factors for everything that happens in your life, things you supposedly have no control over. You push yourself into the role of a victim and attribute your own problems to external causes.

Newsrooms, of course, know that bad news sells—it grabs the attention of viewers and readers. For our brains, negativity is irresistible. Neuroscientists have found that our minds pick up on bad news far more easily than good news. We are constantly asking ourselves: What could go wrong?

Neuroscience is quite clear on how the brain works: our brains are not built for success. A winning mentality does not come naturally to us. We are survivors, and in order to survive, we must focus primarily on threats. This principle is known as the negativity bias: we fixate on potential problems, obstacles, and dangers.

The majority of our brain has not significantly evolved since prehistoric times, meaning its core function remains the same: survival. Our prehistoric ancestors had to be constantly alert to predators, natural disasters, and hostile tribes. They needed to quickly recognise and react to threats. That instinct increased their chances of survival.