Write an article that tells your readers to do something.

Some Guidelines:

- Imitate Structure - 1) Story, 2) Observation, 3) Call to Action
- Keep it Short - Under 500 words.
- Spiky Point of View - Make it sharp. Take a stand.
- Actionable Title - Make it self-evident.

##

Stupid is the New Smart

"Oh that's simple." said one of my colleagues to another. "We'll just minimize the error by using the Jacobian method. It'll be much faster that way. Don't you think?". "Yes", responded the other. "Especially considering the thermal and latency requirements, we can't go with…."

Jacobians… Jacobians, I thought to myself. Like Alibaba's cave, the utterance of the word had triggered open a portal through which I could travel back in time. Should I choose to accept it, I had a mission to recover information buried somewhere in the recesses of my brain. Unfortunately on that day, It was truly mission impossible.

I could have asked what he was on about. But I didn't want to sound stupid. Surely, I had to be perceived as an equal, speaking fluently in Greek and Latin symbols while sipping a microwaved cup of tea (blech!).

I nodded in silence like a bobblehead.

I'm sure you've been part of these discussions before too. But then, out of the blue, someone else asks the question you've kept locked inside your personal Fort Knox. The second coming of the savior of ~~our~~ your times. All the tension releases. You got the answer you needed *and* didn't look dumb. Yaay! Right? Hell no.

What is this paralyzing fear of sounding stupid? What's the worst that can happen? It's ok. Amateurs call it stupidity. Masters call it a beginner's mindset.

The reason we're even here in the first place is because we throw that "Oh you're so stupid look" whenever someone asks a *stupid* question. Oh, don't give me that "Who, me?" puppy eyes look. You know you do it. I do it too.

Turns out, what's easy and obvious to you might not be for many others. Don't dismiss any question as obvious. Appreciate the guts it took to ask it.

If on the other hand, you are the hesitant one, you're not alone. There's a very good chance that many others have the same questions you do, and like you, don't want to appear stupid either. If silence is the preferred language in these circumstances, then, in the end, no one learns anything. The resulting collective ignorance would overflow the Colosseum in Rome (No I didn't measure it).

Now, this wouldn't be a hero's tale if I don't end with how I magnificently reveal my ignorance on a future occasion as fairies and bards sing in a chorus in the background. So here you go.

Approximately 3 months, 1 day, and 4 hours later, said colleague started "The energy minimization function's formulation isn't correct. We're missing a trick here". I cut across and said, "I'm sorry, can you tell me what we're trying to do here? I don't have a clue, sorry". Never have I felt more relieved (I successfully resisted the urge to suggest something might be wrong with the left Phalange).

I stared calmly, eloquently, as my colleague went through the 5 stages of astonishment - Denial, Shock, Suspicion, Analysis, and Acceptance. Then he clarified what he was on about. I stood 10 feet taller that day.

The saying goes *"Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt"*.

I disagree. It should be *"Better to speak up and remove all doubt than be silent and remain a fool"*.

##########

WALK THE PLANK

as Joey did in Friends when everyone else was speaking about a topic that he had no clue about (Of course, I didn't buy an encyclopedia from Penn JilletteGilette as he did afterward and only speak about topics that start with the letter V).

I wasn't blessed with the luck of Harry Potter whose only counter spell to everything thrown at him was "Expelliarmus"[1].

[1] How the heck did he graduate?

STOP HERE. READ EVERYTHING BELOW AT YOUR OWN PERIL.

If I were a camp guidance counselor, this is how I would sound. I agree. I don't like it either. Thank god I'm not one.

##

Hug your Discomfort

Three loaves of bread. One in his mouth, the other two tucked awkwardly in his arms, he stood on the street. Not a penny to his name and all of 17. He had run away from those who suppressed his voice. He had run away from discomfort only to find himself in the cold embrace of discomfort herself. Few would recognize him then. None can forget him now.

He lived with a printer, a writer, a musician, and, a scientist, a statesman, an inventor, and an economist. No, they weren't his neighbors. They were versions of himself when he looked in a mirror. His ascendancy in society and life was marked by a singular trait - learning in discomfort. The crucible of circumstance and adversity forged the diamond we now recognize as one of the founding fathers of the United States.

He couldn't write well, so he pushed himself to learn to write. A printing press proved to be a fertile ground for learning - He had instant access to books. Just as a caterpillar devours leaves before transforming into a butterfly, he voraciously read everything he could get his hands on. He didn't stop there. Despite being afraid his work wasn't worthy, he knew he had to get feedback on his writing. He submitted his work under a pseudonym and learned from it.

He sought discomfort. Deliberately.

Whether it was learning to play musical instruments, discovering electricity, building libraries, or serving society, he repeatedly threw himself into the maelstrom of risk and emerged victorious.

Benjamin Franklin is an example of what happens when you embrace discomfort.

There is no growth without difficulty. We can choose to kick back and be comfortable in our mundane routines or choose to stretch ourselves, become uncomfortable and grow. The secret to succeeding in your life lies in the path you so ferociously avoid.

We avoid discomfort due to the fear of failure. What we don't realize is that it is by failing that we elevate ourselves. Whenever I feel stagnant, I find out what I can do to push myself - to break new barriers. I've tried my hand at painting, music, photography, writing, elocution, engineering, fitness, and so many other random things. I succeeded a fair few times but failed a ton more.

I used to be terrified of failure, but now I've realized it is the path to my evolution.

As Master Yoda says, "Do or Do Not, there is No Try". Have you hugged your discomfort yet?