



By *Josephine Brouard*



Dare or die

Take a chance and step outside your comfort zone – then watch your self-esteem skyrocket

“I’ve always enjoyed doing new things. I also love the thrill of taking risks, and relish it when I pull them off”

AN EMAIL POPPED into my inbox this morning that made me smile. After slaving all weekend over the flowers for my niece’s wedding, one of her guests enquired post-festivities as to the identity of her “floral designer”. Apparently this young man, an events organiser, was interested in this person’s services.

Floral designer? Moi? Would the events maestro believe me if I said that only three weeks earlier I’d whined and whinnied to anyone who’d listen that I’d sooner shoot myself than continue to fossick all over town for the right props to accompany the flora I’d ordered for the nuptials?

I’d never attempted flower arranging on such a scale, but I’ve always enjoyed doing new things. I also love the thrill of taking risks, and relish it when I pull them off. Plus, I like being creative. Besides, how hard could flowers for a wedding be?

Very hard, as it turned out. I came razor-close to calling off the whole thing on a number of occasions – but each time I rallied myself with muttered platitudes like “nothing ventured, nothing gained”.

But now that my Mount Everest has been scaled, my outlook has done a complete volte-face. In the lead up to the event I was frightened and frustrated. Now? As pleased as punch!

“Many people report that their most significant personal growth and development has come from pain, not pleasure,” notes Hugh Mackay in his

latest book *What Makes Us Tick? The Ten Desires That Drive Us* (Hachette, \$35).

No kidding. When I look back on my life, I realise that it’s all the hard, terrible times I’ve suffered and survived that have made me the person I am today.

Migrating to Australia 25 years ago was a big one. I came alone, newly single, and barely knew a soul in this wide, sunny new land. I had a great job, but my sense of loneliness in the first two years often threatened to overwhelm me. I still vividly remember walking home after a movie one night, tears streaming down my face as I succumbed to self-pity.

But what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger, they say, and maybe that’s why so many cancer survivors swear that their disease changed their lives for the better.

Being tested throws up challenges – and, typically, you meet them. When you do, you begin to realise that you’re far better equipped to tackle future bogeymen.

PLENTY OF PEOPLE are frightened of doing things they haven’t done before. But why? How do you grow if you just keep doing what you’ve always done – and are then left wondering why life seems inordinately dull?

Fancy the idea of leaping out of a plane, but simply don’t dare? I’ve done it, and don’t wish to repeat the experience, but at least now I know what it’s like.

Write a book? Done that, too – and

visited Sri Lanka and Nepal and climbed the Himalayas as a result, thank you very much.

Stage a fundraiser? I found that surprisingly scary. What I learnt on that occasion was that asking for help, when you’re doing it on behalf of the voiceless and the disenfranchised, is completely different from asking for yourself. It’s a useful life lesson to digest.

Ultimately, though, I’ve learnt that nothing is as frightening as fear itself. And that “nothing ventured, nothing gained” is a platitude because it is so sublimely true.

Frightened of asking someone out on a date? Go on: the object of your affection might just say “yes”.

Frightened you can’t do that job? How will you ever know ... unless you try?

I thought I could do flowers for a wedding; now I *know* I can. Will I do it again? Never! However, I will continue to push the envelope.

My brother’s a risk-taker too – it must run in the family – but he’s always asking me, wide-eyed, why I’m doing this, that or the other. (The other week it was why on *earth* was I wearing false eyelashes?)

My answer to that is usually the same. “Why not?” I reply. “I like to give things a go!” ●

Josephine Brouard has a psychology degree and a fascination for human behaviour.