

Discomfort is often experienced but rarely addressed.

I asked students to share times they felt uncomfortable, and received hundreds of stories describing the same sensation: realizing you want to get out of a situation you had anticipated feeling more comfortable in, and not immediately knowing how to do so gracefully. A sensation that might best be understood by sitting in a beanbag.

It's an inviting chair which sweeps you off your feet, accommodating your body as if it was made just for you. At first, it's comforting to be held so securely. But it sinks under your attempts to readjust- it doesn't want you to get up. The discomfort is subtle and ambiguous until you start to feel trapped. Your body is immobilized by cultural expectations to enjoy the sensation of being held. You hadn't anticipated the way your body would be grabbed underneath the surface, or how your heaviest parts would sink the deepest. You could flail your arms or cry for help, but you wouldn't, because that would imply your failure to handle yourself in circumstances that "you got yourself into." You sat down, after all. You feel surrounded in a way that only emphasizes how alone you are, and you internalize your discomfort out of shame.

You feel foolish, realizing how much easier it was to sit down than it is to stand back up. You stay for longer than you wanted to, knowing the only trace of your struggle will be the depression you leave in your wake.

In order to understand how it feels, please sit down. This interactive sculpture aims to build empathy amongst one another, because while discomfort can feel isolating, you are never alone.

Fabric printed with hundreds of student quotes sewn alongside relevant literature, placed upside-down, because you can only understand how it feels from the perspective of having sat down.

Please handle with care.

Need to talk to someone?

You are not alone. Contact Stanford's Confidential Support Team (CST) 24/7 Hotline at 650-725-9955.