



**FEARLESS:  
HOW TO TURN FAILURE  
INTO SUCCESS BY  
DEVELOPING A FEARLESS  
MINDSET**

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# Introduction

Few words elicit an emotional response more strongly than the word “failure.” One of the biggest obstacles to success is a fear of failure. In fact, most people are more motivated to avoid failure than they are to achieve success.

Most people don't even have written goals because of a fear of failure. When you set a goal you're defining success, but you're also defining failure!

However, failure is a necessary part of success and successful living. Failure is a common result. It's a lot more common than success. Failure is a short stop along the path to success. There is no significant success without a significant amount of failure, too.

Perhaps failure is something that should be welcomed, or at least considered neutral and expected. You should anticipate a fair amount of failure along the way.

If you're not failing, you're not trying.



OURS IS A WORLD WHERE  
PEOPLE DON'T KNOW  
WHAT THEY WANT AND  
ARE WILLING TO GO  
THROUGH HELL TO GET IT.  
- DON MARQUIS

# The Fear of Failure

So if failure is normal, and the fear of failure is a huge roadblock to success, why are we still afraid of failing?

Fear of failure is one of the most common fears in humans. Unfortunately though, if you have this fear, you're unlikely to experience a lot of success. It might be challenging to conquer this fear, but necessary if you want to reach the highest levels of success.

Let's look closer at this fear.

Fear of failure has several components:

1. **Fear of looking incompetent.** If you fail, you must not know what you're doing, right? That might be true in some cases. However, just because you don't know what you're doing right now doesn't mean you'll never figure it out. It takes practice to be good at anything.
  - Think of how long it took you to learn to walk, talk, ride a bike, swing a golf club, or play an instrument. Those processes are little more than failure after failure.
2. **Fear of looking like a failure.** Suffering a failure doesn't make you a failure. You may have failed to do something, but that's not a permanent character flaw. A person can't be a failure. A person can only experience failure.
3. **Belief that failure is final.** There aren't many things in life that only give you one chance. You can always try again. Abraham Lincoln had more failures than most and still became a great US president. Look up his story and see how yours compares. He had failed careers, businesses, and lost multiple elections.
4. **Fear of your own limitations.** Failure doesn't reveal your long-term limitations. It might reveal your current limitations, but those can be altered. Finding out your limitations is good news, because you can do something about them and become stronger and more capable than you have ever been.
5. **Fear of success.** Maybe you're not afraid of failing at all. Maybe you're actually afraid of succeeding. This might sound counterintuitive, but it can happen. Once you're successful, people will expect more from you. There are a variety of reasons why you might fear success. Give it some thought.

Ask yourself why you fear failure. Is it one of these reasons or do you have another? Understanding the reasons for your fear is the first step to working past it. The mental resistance caused by the fear of failure can be enough to bring your efforts to a standstill.



Success is not final,  
failure is not fatal: it  
is the courage to  
continue that  
counts.

- Winston Churchill

# Identifying Your Fear of Failure

How do you know if you have a fear of failure? Some people like to think they just lack motivation or a clear direction. Others fool themselves into thinking that success doesn't matter to them. But everyone has things they want to accomplish. A fear of failure might be getting in your way.

Can you identify with these actions and thoughts?

1. You're not aggressively and enthusiastically pursuing your goals. If you're not getting up each day and attacking your goals, you might be afraid of failing. Ask yourself what you're waiting for.
2. You can't make up your mind regarding what you want. The inability to choose a goal or a future for yourself is often a symptom of fearing failure. You almost certainly know what you really want, you just don't quite have the nerve to claim it.
3. You can't seem to move past the planning stage. You know someone that's great at making elaborate and impressive plans to achieve their goals, but they never seem to arrive at the starting line. There's always one more thing they need to understand or find.
4. You suffer resistance whenever you plan to work on your goals. This could be experienced in a variety of ways. A few examples include procrastination, fatigue, headaches or other physical symptoms, a sudden urge to clean the house, or a sudden surge of self-doubt or anxiety.
5. Something always seems to come up. If it seems like the world is conspiring against you, it's all in your head. You're using random events to rationalize not taking action.

If you tend to think in these ways, a fear of failure is likely holding you back from the fine life you deserve. But take heart! You can overcome this fear with upcoming strategies.

# A Healthy View of Failure

A healthier and more accurate mindset around failure starts with a different view of failure. If you can view failure in a positive light, your fear of it will dissipate. You might even learn to like it! Think of how much your behavior would change if you viewed failure in a positive light.

Learn to enjoy failure with these strategies and success will become a certainty:

1. **Fail quickly.** Most people spend too much time thinking and planning. The sooner you get started and begin failing, the sooner you'll receive an education from the world. You'll also succeed sooner. So get out there and begin failing as soon as possible.
2. **Avoid identifying with failure.** Failing only means that your approach didn't work. It doesn't mean that YOU are a failure. There's no reason to take failure personally. It has nothing to do with you as a person. If one approach didn't work, try another.
3. **Failure is the most accurate feedback you can get.** Your belief on whether or not something will work is just an opinion, a guess. The same can be said regarding the advice and opinions of others. The only 100% accurate answer you'll receive will come from actually trying. The world will tell you if your idea is sound or not.
4. **It's all just a big game.** At the end of each level of a video game, there's always a difficult challenge or a monster that must be defeated. Life is no different. You don't fail in a video game and throw yourself on the couch while lamenting that you're a failure. Handle your failures in life the way you'd handle failures in a video game. Just start over and keep trying until you've beaten that monster.
5. **Ask, "What if...".** What if you did fail? What would happen? Likely, nothing would happen at all. Everything in the world would continue as it always has.
6. **You are stronger than any failure.** You might not like the idea of being wrong or of failing, but that doesn't mean you can't take it. It may take some practice, but you can learn to get past failure and on to success.

Failure might not be so bad!

It's not hard to see that failure can be viewed positively. It provides accurate feedback on your road to success. You'll never learn more than you'll learn from failure. It has so much to give you if you're willing to accept it. Fail quickly and often!



Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness.  
- Oprah Winfrey

# Learning to Accept Failure

Failure is the best teacher you'll ever have. It can't be emphasized enough. Not only should failure be accepted as part of the journey to success, it can be viewed in a positive light. When you understand how much failure has to offer you, you might come to view failure as a friend.

**These action steps will help you appreciate failure and all it provides:**

1. Write down all of the significant mistakes you've ever made. Keep a mistake/failure journal. Whenever you've received less than ideal results, write it down. Start with your earliest memories and work forward. A few examples might include:
  - Times you played it too safe and regretted it later.
  - You ignored a gut feeling and regretted it.
  - You said something that you later regretted.
  - You made a faulty assumption without getting all the facts.
  - Maybe you ate too much ice cream at the fair and got sick.
  - Perhaps you dated your best friend's ex and ruined your friendship.
2. **Look for patterns.** We are creatures of habit. Any mistake we've survived, we often repeat. What are the mistakes or failures that you've made repeatedly throughout your life?
3. **Ask yourself what you could learn from each of those mistakes.** What is the lesson to be learned? What is the moral of the story? Each mistake or failure is a learning opportunity. What could you have learned?
4. **What could you do to prevent each of those mistakes in the future?** Is being familiar with your past mistakes enough? Maybe it is. Maybe there are steps you need to take to ensure that you don't repeat your mistakes.
5. **Ask yourself how great your life would be if you had only made each of those mistakes once.** Think about that. You've repeated many of your mistakes. Consider what your life would be like if you learned from every mistake you made and never repeated that mistake.
  - That's the power of failure. It's the most effective way to learn and enhance your life. So, fail quickly and fail often.
6. **View your actions and decisions as experiments.** Think of anything you do and say as a search for the truth. If it doesn't work out, you need to try something else. It's just a failed experiment. There's no reason to avoid a harmless experiment. Experiments are fun and interesting.

How do you feel about failure now? It's easy to see just how valuable failure can be when viewed from a positive perspective.

Each failure is an amazing opportunity. Change your view of failure and you'll be less resistant to making mistakes. Failing is ultimately a good thing.



You build on failure. You use it as a stepping stone. Close the door on the past. You don't try to forget the mistakes, but you don't dwell on it. You don't let it have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space.

- Johnny Cash

# Developing a Fearless Mindset

A fearless mindset is a great defense against the fear of failure. Having the right perspective, a dose of motivation, and plenty of optimism can carry you over the finish line to achieving your goals.

You might be fearful now, but that doesn't have to be the way you face life going forward. You can reduce your fear of failure.

**See how a fearless mindset may be the missing component for your success:**

- 1. Optimism is important.** If you expect the worst, you'll never try. With a positive attitude, you'll be better able to forge ahead with your plans. An optimistic attitude will allow you to handle failure more easily.
  - Practice being optimistic in your daily life. Expect that the weather will be good today. If the weather is bad, expect that it will clear. Have high expectations for everything you do, from looking for a parking space to asking someone out for a date.
  - Interestingly, studies show that pessimistic people tend to be more accurate, but optimistic people are more successful. Would you rather be right or be happy?
- 2. Be a consumer of motivational material.** Expose yourself to things that you find motivating.
  - Books. Read things that get your juices flowing. It could be quotes, biographies, or articles related to successful people. Think about your heroes and learn more about them. Fiction, non fiction, it doesn't matter as long as you're inspired.
  - Listen to motivational material. Songs, speeches, books on tape, or seminars. Try to listen to something each day that inspires you to be your best.
  - Movies. Maybe Rocky puts you in the mood to take on the world. Think of the movies that motivate you to take on the world and watch a couple each week.
  - By reading, listening, and watching things that motivate you, you're attacking your brain and mindset from every possible angle.
- 3. Become good at dealing with discomfort.** That negative feeling you get when you think about failure is just an uncomfortable tingle. You don't have to allow it to change your behavior. Learn to keep moving forward anyway. It will go away soon enough.

Change your mindset and watch your life evolve. When you change the way you look at failure, you change your behavior and the way you evaluate risk. Spend a little time each day motivating yourself and become comfortable with discomfort. You'll soon feel like you can handle anything the world throws at you.



Winning is great, sure, but if you are really going to do something in life, the secret is learning how to lose. Nobody goes undefeated all the time.

If you can pick up after a crushing defeat, and go on to win again, you are going to be a champion someday.

- Wilma Rudolph

# Minimizing the Likelihood of Failure

Just as you can minimize the likelihood of getting a sunburn, you can minimize the likelihood of failure. You are still likely to experience failure on the way to achieving your goals, but you can decrease the chances of it happening.

There's no reason to fail more than necessary. Do your part and success will come at a faster pace.

There are five primary reasons people fail:

1. **A lack of perseverance.** Call it perseverance or patience. Success can take a while to happen. You may have to go through several failures to finally find success. Brace yourself for the possibility that success might take longer than you expect.
2. **Insufficient focus.** Trying to do too many things ensures that you'll never be great at any of them. Everyone should have one big goal that they work on daily. What is yours?
3. **Negative attitude.** Optimism is necessary to get started and to keep going. If you have negative expectations, you're going to give up before you reach your goal. Stay positive.
4. **Rigidity.** When you fail, it's important to tailor your approach based on your new perspective. Avoid holding on too tightly to one approach. Be flexible and you'll have a better chance of reaching your goal. Remember that the goal is to find success, not to prove that your first instincts were correct.
5. **Insufficient effort.** You're going to have to try hard. Mediocre efforts lead to mediocre results.

Are you guilty of any of these? Why stack the deck against yourself? Avoid these success pitfalls and you can reduce the amount of failure you experience. You'll save time and mental energy that you can spend on another goal in the future.

Don't be afraid of failure, but don't suffer more than necessary either. Approach your goals optimistically, confidently, and with your full focus.



Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.  
- Theodore Roosevelt

# Famous Failures

Many of your favorite actors, writers, singers and historical heroes dealt with a stunning amount of failure. You can derive inspiration from these people and perhaps duplicate their success. You can be just as successful as anyone else. The key is surviving failure.

Many famous and highly successful people suffered a long string of failures, such as:

1. Abraham Lincoln. He may have been the greatest US president, but he wasn't always successful. It's safe to say that he had more failures than most of us are willing to endure:

- He went into the Illinois militia as a captain and left as a private.
- He was defeated when he ran for the state legislature.
- Failed in business.
- His girlfriend died.
- Had a nervous breakdown.
- Was defeated for Speaker of the Illinois State Senate.
- Defeated while running for Congress.
- Defeated for US senate.
- Defeated for nomination for vice-president.
- Lost for US senate again.

2. J.K Rowling. As the author of the beloved Harry Potter series of books and a net worth of nearly \$1 billion, Rowling had her fair share of rejections before finding success.

- After spending five years to write the first Harry Potter book, it took an additional two years to find a publisher.
- She was a single mother, on welfare, and wrote the book on a manual typewriter. Word processors were available by this time and electric typewriters had been around for many years.
- She was rejected by a dozen publishers before she found one who was interested.

3. Sylvester Stallone. While he managed to become a household name, earn millions of dollars, and win an Oscar, Sylvester Stallone faced many challenges in becoming an actor.

- He was turned down by over 1,500 talent agents in New York City. There weren't even 1,500 talent agents in NYC. After he approached every agent in the city, he started back at the beginning of the list and tried again.
- He was repeatedly told that he looked and sounded funny and didn't have a chance of making it as an actor.
- He had many problems in school throughout his childhood and attended a special school for kids with learning disabilities.
- He got his first job by spending the night in an agent's office. He had been rejected at 4pm and refused to leave. He was still there the next morning and was given his first job.

How much have you really failed? You can bet that the most successful people you know have failed much more than you.

Be inspired by these great stories. Pick up a biography of your favorite hero and read about his life. You might be surprised and motivated by the amount of struggle they were able to overcome.



At the end of the day, you are solely responsible for your success and your failure. And the sooner you realize that, you accept that, and integrate that into your work ethic, you will start being successful. As long as you blame others for the reason you aren't where you want to be, you will always be a failure.

- Erin Cummings

# Conclusion

Now you can see just how beneficial failure can be. It is a natural and necessary part of achieving any success. Failure lets you know when you've approached a goal from an ineffective direction. It allows you to make distinctions and to learn valuable lessons.

Avoid making the same mistakes twice and you'll find the rate of success in your life increases.

The fear of failure can be a great hindrance to achievement. Getting over this fear all but guarantees success. Fear can stop your efforts and lead to procrastination. Embrace failure and all it has to offer, and you'll find success sooner than you think!