

HOW FAILURE LEADS TO SUCCESS

I think we can all agree with the statement, “The road to success always includes failed attempts.” There is not a successful person who has not had their share of letdowns and failures. This is true in business, the arts, friendships and love. However, the same circumstance that presents the potential to fail also serves as a gateway for the opportunity to succeed. You cannot close the door on the former, without also closing the door on the latter.

We all have a lot of experience with failure beginning from the time we’re infants. We struggled to walk, talk, read and write. Indeed, every success we celebrated began with failed attempts. Failure is a function of trying. If you want to excel at something, you have to fail a few times.

The trick to turning failures into successes is to use failure as a tool and to embrace failure. To help you start embracing failure as a tool, redefine failure as a positive experience. For example, instead of defining failure as a lack of success, redefine failure as the opportunity to try again with revision...or a “do over.”

Failure allows you to move on to the next idea or attempt. Michael Jordan once said, “I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 30 games. On 26 occasions, I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” Thomas Edison failed multiple times before finally perfecting the light bulb. However, he didn’t take the failures personally. He just viewed each failure as, “one more thing that didn’t work.” Having a healthy attitude that failure is a teaching experience and not a fatality is what helped carry both of these men to success.

Acknowledging your failure or mistake is the first step toward using failure to accelerate your success. Once you can acknowledge your error, you can then examine it and figure out what went wrong. If you can correct the mistake, then do it. If the reason for the failure is out of your control, then move on to “Plan B.” People able to bounce back quickly when faced with adversity show resiliency. Resiliency is an important factor to success, and failure helps build resiliency. Through failure, you gain confidence knowing that you’re strong and that you can always pick yourself back up no matter what happens. Every time you cross over a hurdle, you gain strength in your confidence. By failing, you learn that failure is not a permanent event. Positive thinking, looking for the lesson in the mistake, and maintaining a strong support system will help you bounce back quickly.

It’s also important not to take failure personally. This is especially true of rejection. Rejection is hard for everyone to deal with, yet inevitable for everyone to experience. When facing rejection, keep in mind that everyone views the world in his or her own way. Just because someone rejects your view or idea does not mean that you are in error. It just means that they do not see things as you do. The positive side of rejection is that it gives you the opportunity to re-examine your view from a different perspective.

Whether or not you have ever thought of failure as an opportunity, deep-down, you probably knew that this is the true nature of failure. Still, failure does not feel good and it can be frustrating. But the quicker we can bounce back from failure, the better. Additionally, the ability to bounce back quickly will help you embrace failure. Just imagine the great things you can do when you begin using failure as a tool!



An EAP counselor is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency and urgent assistance. To schedule an appointment, receive a community referral or for inquiries our office is open 7:30 am to 6:30 pm PST.

