



# OVERCOME THE FEAR OF FAILURE

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# Three Ways to Overcome Fear of Failure

Research suggests that we can change the way we think and feel about failure.



Taking risks can either result in feeling failure or paying off big in our lives. It's only by being willing to take these risks, we make it possible to experience great success. The alternative is taking the safe path and still risk not knowing what could have been. What are we to do?

There is a fear of failure many people have that can keep us from taking the risk, or not make a decision at all. When we fail, we might worry that we'll be punished, and we feel ashamed or regret, so we try to avoid failure at all costs. But it doesn't have to be that way.

How, exactly, do we use failure to our advantage when it feels so bad to fail? The first step is to overcome our fear of failure, and these three steps can help.

## 1. Find the benefits of past failures.

All negative experiences have some benefits, even if they are hard to see or appreciate at that particular moment. By finding these benefits with past failures, you may enhance this ability as you move forward and find the benefits more quickly. You will train yourself to become more resilient for the next time you feel like you have failed.

To find the benefits, start by picking a past event when you felt failure and begin writing out three things you learned from it. For example, if you missed an important deadline, maybe you learned that you need to prioritize better, say no to more projects, or tone down the perfectionism. Ask yourself, “Have you made any changes to prevent failures like this from happening in the future?” If not, take the time now to make the necessary small changes.

Next, ask your friends how they have benefited from past failures. For example, a former boss of mine once published an error in a mass email, and now she has a second person edit her big, important emails. A colleague stumbled through giving a presentation, and now he practices a lot more and he’s less afraid to stumble again — he can handle whatever happens. Learning how others overcome their failures can help decrease your fears and show you how to find the benefits of your own mistakes more easily.

Plenty of business experts will tell you that you should reflect on your failures right after you experience them as a way to extract maximum learning from the experience. Keep in mind that if you are still feeling upset about the failure, it will be harder to come up with effective solutions — so it might be better to wait until the sting has subsided.

## 2. When failure is possible, view it as a challenge.

Completing important tasks — tasks that you could fail at — is stressful. But, how you choose to approach stress is up to you.



If you think of stress as a threat, as many of us do, your body will prepare for battle — and you'll feel like you're in a battle. On the other hand, if you choose to view this stress as a challenge, then you're more likely to think you are capable of handling it. As a bonus, thanks to the calming effect it has on your body, you actually will be more capable and less likely to fail.

To build a challenge mindset, reflect on past challenges that you've overcome. Let's say you're worried about a meeting with your boss. Take a moment to think back to past meetings. Did you handle them successfully? What exactly did you do? When you remind yourself that you have succeeded before, the task in front of you doesn't seem so insurmountable.

Next, visualize success. By imagining yourself doing well, you feel more positive, which can enhance your performance. On the other hand, if you ruminate about what could go wrong, your fear builds, and the failure you fear becomes more likely.

Keep in mind that even if you are able to shift your brain to stop seeing something as a threat, you may feel similar physical sensations, like nerves and shakiness. If you notice these, try to see them as excitement, energy, and “good” stress — evidence that what you're doing is important to you.

### **3. Treat yourself kindly when you experience failure.**

There will never be enough hours in the day to do your best on every project. You'll be cramped for time or make a mistake and disappoint yourself. In these moments, you can be really mean to yourself. Alternatively, you can choose to be kind to yourself, taking steps and cultivating attitudes that can stave off guilt, shame, and embarrassment.

One way to be kind to yourself is with self-care. For example, you'll benefit from seeking out a friend to talk to whom you know will be compassionate. You may prefer a stress-relieving activity, like exercise, to help you cope with intense negative emotions. Whatever it is you do to show yourself love, it's important to keep this in your regular routine to reward yourself as well as destress your mind.



It's also important to practice self-compassion when you make mistakes. Remember, everyone fails, and there is no need to be a bully to yourself, feel guilty, or put yourself down. Indeed, that kind of attitude won't help you persist in the face of failure in the future. Instead, try talking to yourself in a way that is supportive, kind, and caring — and you'll be more likely to acknowledge mistakes and do better next time. I tell myself, "I am human and human's make mistakes." My dad would tell me, "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and try again." You are truly doing yourself a disservice if you give up rather than try, try again!

With these tips in mind, you can more easily overcome your fear of failure at work and in life.

If you're still struggling with the fear of failure, contact me for a FREE discussion about this. I have lots of great tips to help you get through the fear of failure.

[Click here](#) to set up your free session. I can't wait to talk with you!

