



Confronting Failure

BIG IDEA(S):

- What is failure?
- How can a growth mindset help me reframe my failures?

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Failures handout
- Growth Mindset handout
- Materials to create a social campaign, such as devices with photography and recording abilities, drawing materials, and/or paper

OVERVIEW

In this fifth session, young people will reflect on their own failures and investigate the importance of a growth mindset when it comes to finding failure's connection to success. They will then create a social campaign to educate their peers about the importance of confronting failure with a growth mindset.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Print and copy the handouts listed in the *What You Will Need* section so there are enough copies for each participant.
- Gather and prepare the devices listed in the *What You Will Need* section for leader and participant use.
- Read through the activity to make sure you understand the directions before the session begins.

ENGAGE

- Begin by distributing one **Failures handout** to each young person.
- Define failure as a time when you do not succeed. Explain that a failure can be as small as failing to set your alarm for the correct time, as big as failing to get into a school that you wanted to, or anything in between. You can fail yourself and you can fail others.
- Then give the young people a few minutes to fill out the handout's first two columns: "My failures" and "How did I react at the time?"
 - Explain that each young person should brainstorm times when they have failed in life—in both big and small ways. Encourage them to think about failures that may have occurred at school, at home, in sports, etc., and challenge them to record as many as they can think of. As they do, they should also fill out the middle column with a quick description of how they reacted when they failed.
- Reassure the young people that they will not have to share this list with others if they don't want to!

EXPLORE

1. Get everyone's attention and introduce them to the idea that failure can be approached with one of two mindsets:
 - Those with a **fixed mindset** believe their qualities are fixed traits and therefore cannot change. These people document their intelligence and talents rather than working to develop and improve them. They also believe that talent alone leads to success, and effort is not required.
 - Those with a **growth mindset** have an underlying belief that their learning and intelligence can grow with time and experience. When people believe they can get smarter, they realize that their effort has an effect on their success, so they put in extra time, which leads to higher achievement.¹ A growth mindset is necessary in order to learn from our failures, grow as a person, and gain wisdom from our mistakes.
2. Encourage the young people to look at their reactions to their failures and consider: Did I approach most of my failures with a growth mindset or a fixed mindset?
3. Invite a few people (who would like to share) to share an example of a time they approached failure with a growth mindset.
4. Explain that when we approach our failures with humility and resilience and then move forward from them with perseverance and motivation, we learn the value of a challenge, personal responsibility, and hard work. The lessons we learn from our failures can fuel our future success!
5. Next, encourage the young people to work on the final column of their **Failures handout** and re-approach each of their failures with a growth mindset. If they were to think about these failures now, what wisdom did they gain or lesson did they learn from each one?
6. Then discuss: Do these lessons make you rethink the value of your failures?
7. Invite the young people to brainstorm some common fixed mindset phrases that they frequently hear themselves and/or their peers say. Keep a list on the board as they share. It may be helpful to begin with a couple examples, such as:
 - "I'm going to fail this test no matter how much I study."
 - "I'm never going to be good at..."
8. Distribute one **Growth Mindset handout** to each young person and explain that they will now be challenged to change these mindsets. Review the directions together and be sure the young people know what materials are available for them to use as they create their campaign.
9. Then allow the young people to work individually, in pairs, or in small groups and instruct them to begin.
10. When there is a little time left in the session, bring the young people back together and encourage them to share a highlight from their campaign.
11. Finally, conclude the session by encouraging everyone to reflect on and share how these new insights on failure may affect their lives going forward.

¹ DeveloppingGoodHabits.com

MAKE THE CONNECTION

A growth mindset is important in all careers—including STEM. In fact, STEM careers are so full of challenges that a growth mindset is integral to success. Not only will a growth mindset enable you to better approach problem-solving in your career, but it could even help you better see a STEM career as a possibility. Remember: Anything is possible if you set your mind to it!

EXTEND AND EVALUATE

Do you meet more than once a month? In an upcoming session, you could have the young people:

- Continue to build out their social campaigns and begin to implement them! They can also monitor the success of their campaigns and modify them accordingly.
- Research a celebrity's path to success, as well as the failures they had along the way. They can then consider what they learned about success (or failure) from this person.
- Create a personal slogan about failure's connection to success—including graphics, color, and design elements to portray their message.

My failures (big and small)	How did I react at the time?	Thinking about this failure now, what wisdom did I gain from it?

GROWTH MINDSET CAMPAIGN: THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

Directions:

1. Work with your group to create at least four posts for a new social campaign designed to promote a growth mindset and a positive attitude toward failure among your peers. Your campaign should share phrases, slogans, and/or motivational messages designed to remind your peers about failure's connection to success.
2. Be sure to select the social platform you will use before you create your campaign, and then consider word count, imagery, video timing, hashtags, and other design elements as needed.
3. Use the space below to brainstorm ideas. When you are ready, use a separate piece of paper or device to create four exemplary posts for your campaign.