



Rethinking Failure

LEARN

How do you feel when you fail? When people experience failure, they often report feelings of embarrassment, shame, and depression. Sometimes, failure can also feel like rejection.

But failure—usually viewed as the opposite of success—is actually an essential step along the pathway to accomplishing goals and achieving personal and professional growth! Whether you fail is not the important thing, since we all fail, it's what you do after you fail that matters.

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.

When we approach our failures with humility and resilience and then move forward from them with perseverance and motivation, we learn the value of challenge, personal responsibility, and hard work. It is the lessons learned from our failures that can fuel our future success!

INVESTIGATE

Want to work on approaching your future failures with a growth mindset? Work your way through these three activities, each designed to challenge your attitude toward failure.

1. **Research famous failures:** Below are four celebrities who each had something to say about failure. Choose one that interests you and use the Internet to investigate their path to success. Once you know their story, consider: Why do you think they said this about failure? What can you learn about success from this person?
 - **J.K. Rowling:** “It is impossible to live without failing at something unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all, in which case you have failed by default.”
 - **Michael Jordan:** “I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 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.”
 - **Lin-Manuel Miranda:** “I try to let my decisions be guided not by what I think will succeed or fail, but what I’m going to learn from that process.”
 - **Ang Lee:** “Many times when you make a movie, it feels like your biggest mistake. But even if a film isn’t a hit, you shouldn’t view it as a mistake.”

¹ DevelopingGoodHabits.com

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CAREER FINDER (CONTINUED)



2. **Failures Versus Wisdom:** Reflect on your personal failures (both in school and in life) and record them in the left column below. Then move to the right column and record any valuable wisdom you gained or any lessons you learned from each one.

If you're stuck, consider:

- Did you have a fixed mindset or a growth mindset during the experience?
- If you could do it over, what would you do differently next time?
- How could this failure lead to future success?

Failures	Wisdom
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Once your chart is complete, reflect on the wisdom you have gained. Do these lessons make you rethink the value of your failures?

3. **Develop a Failure Slogan:** Create a slogan (or a short motivational message) to remind you about failure's connection to success. You can use web searches to find examples and inspiration. Be sure to include graphics, color, and design elements to portray your message. Then place your completed slogan somewhere you'll see it often so it serves as a constant reminder that it's okay to fail!