

Fifth Week: Overcome Your Worry by Overcoming Your Fear of Failure

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I don't know about you, but no one ever taught me how to fail successfully. There was no course in college called, "Failure 101". I'm not sure if they would grade you as Pass/Fail in such a course, but that course wasn't offered. But as we all know, failure is an inevitable part of our lives-and no one has gone out of his or her way to get us prepared.

We've heard unhelpful ideas such as, "Winning is everything" and "How to win and never lose" and "There are winners and losers". It's a lot of hype. Everyone loses sometime. Even the people we admire most have had big losses. Whether it's [sports](#), finance, relationships, academics, medicine, law, construction, or business---we all have to face some losses.

We are not "winners" or "losers". But we do have some experiences, some moments, when we lose and some when we win.

You worry in order to avoid failure

Your worry may be driven by your perfectionistic idea that you should never fail or that failure is horrible or that failure is humiliating. You worry to "be sure" you don't fail. You think that if you worry you will avoid any failure. But what is so bad about a failure---now and then?



I'll give you an example of someone I know. Let's call him Larry. Now, Larry got his PhD in psychology and took the licensing exam. Much to his surprise he didn't pass the exam. Larry thought he was stupid, a failure, and that everyone who knew him would think he was loser. But, much to his credit, he actually decided to study really hard before he took it the next time. He passed. Years later, he is very successful, with a large practice. Larry was able to bounce back from an experience of failure, try harder, learn more and finally have a successful experience. Larry overcame an obstacle.

Larry was a student of mine years ago and his experience encourages me every time I think about how we need to face failure. His experience with failing at the exam taught me something. The question for you, when you think about the possibility of failing, is, "What about failure is so bad?"

What's so bad about failing?



If you think that FAILURE IS A CATASTROPHE then you will be reluctant to try new things, you will avoid any risks, and you will worry about failing in the future. Do any of the following sound like you?

- I can't stand failing
 - If I fail at something, I think that "I AM A FAILURE"
 - People will think I'm a loser if I fail.
 - I shouldn't try something unless I am sure I won't fail
- If I fail, I might as well give up

Twenty ways to overcome your fear of failing

We could go on, but you get the point. You just "can't stand" failing. But that intolerance of difficulty--your inability to fall down and get back up--- keeps you stuck in your worrisome mind. But what if you no longer feared failure? What if you accepted the idea that sometimes you will fall down--only to get back up? What if you thought you could learn from failing, try harder, be proud of overcoming an obstacle? What then?



Your fear of failure has kept you trapped. The good news is that you can change it.

I've developed twenty coping ideas that you might use to help you confront your fear of failure. In fact, you can think about confronting failure as an opportunity to let go with your worry.

Let's see if any of the following twenty coping statements could help you.

1. I didn't fail, my behavior failed
2. I can learn from my failure
3. I can be challenged by my failure
4. I can try harder
5. Maybe it wasn't a failure

6. I can focus on other behaviors that will succeed
7. I can focus on what I can control
8. It wasn't essential to succeed at that
9. There were some behaviors that did pay off
10. Everyone fails at something
11. Maybe no one noticed
12. Did I have the right goal?
13. Failure is not fatal
14. Were my standards too high?
15. Did I do better than before?
16. I can still do everything I always did, even though this failed
17. Failing at something means I tried. Not trying is worse.
18. I've just begun
19. Tomorrow is another success
20. Tomorrow is today

Think about something you are worried about. Perhaps you are worried that you won't do well on a test, or that someone might not like you, or that you might lose some money, or...whatever. Then go through the coping ideas listed above and think about how you could use these.

Let us know. Let us know about what you think is so bad about failing. Let us know how you have learned to cope with that fear. And , let's learn from failing. This is FAILURE 101.

I discuss these coping ideas in my book, [The Worry Cure: Seven Steps to Stop Worry from Stopping You](#).

More later.

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Links:

[1] http://www.amazon.com/Worry-Cure-Seven-Steps-Stopping/dp/1400097665/sr=8-2/qid=1168229522/ref=pd_bbs_sr_2/102-9636244-5523303?ie=UTF8&s=books

[2] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/anxiety-files>