

CATHERINE F. COLLAUTT, PH.D.

FAILURE AND
CONFIDENCE:
HOW TO
OVERCOME
ONE AND
RETAIN—
OR REGAIN!
—THE OTHER

A FOUR-STEP MINDMAP
FOR NEGOTIATING
SETBACKS AND FAILURE

WWW.CATHERINECOLLAUTT.COM

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, redistributed, duplicated, copied, or otherwise altered, re-printed, or published in any form or any medium without prior written consent of the author.

That being said, by all means: share, share, and share some more. All I ask is that you credit the work as mine. Thank you.

**Other titles by Catherine Collaunt, Ph.D.
available at www.catherinecollaunt.com/shop/**

On Faith. Or Why You Don't Live Without It.

On Having One Life. Or What's True About Reincarnation.

On Magic and Miracles. Or Walking Through
A Land Of Wonders, Unwondering.

On Selfishness. Or Why A Rose Is Not Selfish
Because It Wants To Be A Rose.

Contents

Step One: Make peace with encountering failure; the goal is not to never fail, but to learn to fail better.	5
Step Two: Know that success and failure share the same road.	9
Step Three: Applaud yourself to the extent you got in the ring instead of sitting on the sidelines.	10
Step Four: Circumscribe your conclusions—and your shame—to the iteration.	12
Review	15

Failure and Confidence: How to overcome one and retain or regain!—the other.

*The question, 'How can I overcome failure – even and especially devastating failure – and regain confidence?', is an important one – in work and business, in relationships, personal and professional, in our lives in general. The reason it is so important is not simply because failures and setbacks happen from time to time, but because **they are pretty much guaranteed to happen**. That is: if we are going to live a life worth living – one wherein we are going to try new things, and especially to be new things – the chances of making it through life without setbacks and failures is well neigh nil.*

So first things first.



STEP ONE. Recognize that the question, ‘How can I overcome failure and regain confidence?’, is not about *possibility*, (as in, ‘How is it possible for me to ...?’), but about *necessity*: I *have to find a way to deal* with setbacks, and failures, even, and perhaps especially, devastating failures, and to regain confidence when I lose it. **I *have to find a way to overcome; it must be possible.*** Because *they are going to happen.*

Action Step: Take it for granted that you will have failures and setbacks, and even blows to your confidence. Failing and losing are not themselves cause for concern. In fact if they are part of ‘the good life’, then *not* ever having failures to show would be more cause for concern. Leave off drawing conclusions about your character, your worth and/or your entire existence *because you’ve seen failures.* You will see failures, you’re *supposed to* see failures - otherwise you’re very likely (read: definitely) not *really* trying. And by that I mean: not giving enough of your self to your life.

Repeat out loud: I’m committed to living a life worth living, to creating new things, and to becoming all I have yet to become – I thereby understand that setbacks and failures will be *part and parcel* of my journey. So I will make it a must to learn to deal with them in a way that is *healthy, productive, and conducive to* picking myself up, dusting myself off, and moving forward in my life. I will not take them primarily as signs that I should stop, or that I am a loser – I will first take them as a sign that I am endeavoring to be something different, something more, than I was yesterday. This is *good.*

Action Step: Relax about it. So you tried, and you failed. - *And?* what do you want to say? That you shouldn’t have tried *because* you failed? That wouldn’t be fair. My advice: *try* not to be dramatic about it, drawing demeaning, robust conclusions about whether, given your ineptitude, you should even be allowed to exist. Try not to be dramatic about the failure *before* you try to find a reason to try again, and you’ll

get farther. The only reason to be dramatic about your failure is comic relief; otherwise, your mantra is Beckett's:

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter.

Try again. Fail again. Fail better.

Make the main point of your failure to learn to failure better next time, not to assess the contents of your being.

A Word or Two on Mistakes: The easiest way to get rid of the good majority of our anxiety about trying (and failing) is to get rid of the fear of making a mistake. And that is really not too difficult for it amounts to no more, though no less, than redressing our conception of what a mistake actually *is*. A 'mistake', it says here in the dictionary, is an incorrect idea or opinion *come to light*; or a thing *done* incorrectly. The qualifications are important because it is only when the incorrect idea, which may have been lying there dormant for some time, and may have otherwise continued this way indefinitely – it is only when it *comes to light* that it *gets noticed*; and of course, *noted* as 'a mistake'. Now I know we have experienced this 'coming to light' as a *bad* thing; and this is because it *is* a bad thing *for our ego*. **But it is actually a good thing. – That is, for you, as an organism, as a larger whole.** For is it better to continue living with an erroneous belief, or to live without it – even if that meant it had to expose itself (and you with it) in order for you to do so? Which is better? For you, and your life, which *is* better?

Each and every mistake, seen in this light, is simply an *opportunity for growth*, (if also an irritating reminder for the ego). It is not The End, it is not even an end – it is simply *an opportunity* to correct something. An opportunity you would likely have missed *had you not* made the mistake. Yes it is unpleasant to be wrong, and distasteful to be shown to be wrong, and tragic to bear the negative consequences of having been mistaken; by all means allow the ego its drama. *But it is nonetheless true* that it is precisely by your mistaken idea coming to light that *you see* that it needs

to be changed. *And that is the point: change it.* I repeat: *that* is the *point* of the mistake – not to make you feel stupid or to teach you shame, but to show you where or what you need to change *to be better off*. **A mistake inherently offers an opportunity for growth; and error, the direction to find it.** Is the secrecy of your misperception (the desire to not know, or let anyone else know, about it) really more important to you than your own (quality of) life?

A blow to the ego for an opportunity *to actually be* better off than you once were – this is our choice. – For *you can always be* better off for having made the mistake, inasmuch as you are always better off for ‘having seen the light’. You always have the *opportunity* to be better off here – what you choose to do with it (e.g. be embarrassed, or defensive, or deny it) is *entirely up to you*. It is your *choice*. **You can always choose to ‘redeem’ your mistake, in the most substantial and profound sense, by choosing to learn from it.** (It is also true that where you don’t, you are likely to find yourself making the same mistake, replaying the same pattern over and over, until you get it – i.e. until you do change.) Just change your mistaken idea or behavior to conform to the new truth life has exposed.



Success V. Freedom

Exercise: List 3 things your failure, and any mistakes therein, have taught you – i.e. 3 erroneous beliefs, assumptions, practices, or ways of being that were brought to light by the failure and/or mistakes therein. Now, in light of this information, list 3 ways you could *fail better* at the same endeavor next time.

Three revelations my mistakes / failures brought to light:
1.
2.
3.

How can I fail better next time, based on these revelations?
1.
2.
3.



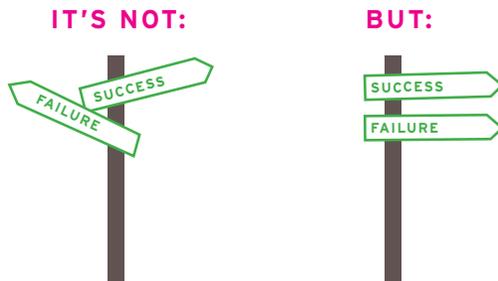
STEP TWO. Recognize that failure and success are part of the same path. Part of the reason you are going to encounter setbacks and failures is because you are living and trying for new things, new creations, new ways of being. The other reason you will see failures and setbacks is because success and failure are not two different roads, like you would meet at a crossroads, for example. **Success and failure share or *are* the same road - picture success just *farther down* the path.**

Think about it: *Always* before you *can* do something, there is a period of time in which you cannot (or have not yet proven you can) do this thing. You *always can't* do it, *first*. In fact up until that 3rd, 10th, for 500th time when you succeed - *every prior attempt is a "failure" or a "set-back"*. **This means that successful people fail just as often - if not more - than their unsuccessful counterparts.** You've probably heard some version of the saying that *the most important difference* between successful and unsuccessful people is that the successful ones never interpret failure as the final word on the subject. I like Robert Kiyosaki's version:

The fear of losing ... is real. Everyone has it. It's how you handle losing that makes the difference in one's life. Failure inspires winners and defeats losers. The greatest secret of winners is that failure inspires winning; thus, they're not afraid of losing.

That is worth repeating: the most *important* difference between successful and unsuccessful people is *the way they respond* to 'losing' (and to failure).

Repeat out loud: I want to be a successful person – that means I will take failure to signal that success is simply farther down the road.



Exercise: Give 3 examples of times when failure(s) preceded your success at something.

Three examples when failure(s) happened first, but success eventually followed:
1.
2.
3.



STEP THREE. Applaud yourself for trying. Everyone wants to be ‘the guy who succeeds’, fine. Not really worth talking about. The real question, and choice before you, is whether you want to be the guy that *tries*. **Yes, you do. So *when you do, applaud yourself first*.** Remember that these were your options: try or not try. *Genuinely* applaud yourself for trying, for putting yourself out there. This will help you to retain, or regain, confidence.

Note: Your applause should be equal to your earnestness (how much of yourself you really gave) and the raw effort you made - *not in proportion to your perceived success (or lack thereof)*. Applaud yourself *to the extent that you got in the ring instead of sitting on the sideline*. And *not* like it’s a ‘consolation prize’, because it isn’t. Give yourself props for doing the most important thing: putting yourself out

Success V. Freedom

there and trying. Even when you 'win' I would say: Celebrate *the effort*, enjoy the result.

Exercise: Remember an instance when you failed or made a big mistake. Now write 5 reasons why you actually admire your effort, that you made an effort, rather than stepping out of the ring or sitting on the sidelines.

My big mistake or failure: 5 reasons I genuinely admire myself for making the effort I did, notwithstanding the result:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.



STEP FOUR. Confine or circumscribe your conclusions - and your embarrassment - to the iteration. Don't let *this specific* setback become global -- about YOU, your life, your abilities. Confine your conclusions, and your shame, to *this* iteration. *This* try. *This* specific experiment. i.e. to *this particular* manifestation of your effort, to *this* try.

For example: say you fail your driver's test – or, say I failed my driver's test, which I did, three times I think. This, after I had already been driving, without any accidents or mishaps, for quite awhile (don't ask). So, after studying and practicing, I fail the first time – or the second, or the third – what do I conclude? That I am a horrible driver? That I am incapable of driving? That I will never pass my driver's test so I should just stop? None of that is necessarily true! And in fact: what I am, and what I am or am not capable of, is still undetermined at the end of a failure *because success, even if it does exist, exists farther down this same road.*

But fine, say I am incapable, the question is incapable of or inept at what exactly? **Watch the tendency to draw increasing *global* conclusions as a result of a specific failure.** Do I question my ability to pass a driving test or to drive under artificial conditions as if I were driving on the street (e.g. neglecting to put my signal on to pull over to a curb in an empty parking lot with not another car in sight)? Do I go on to question my ability to drive car at all, or to ever be capable of driving? And what about my ability to ever get things right, to ever get what I want, or to ever make what I want happen in my life? Are all these things being brought into question by this particular failure?

The more we generalize and abstract our conclusions from the particular iteration or expression of our effort, the more we inflate its failure to cover ever increasing aspects of ourselves and our lives. ***And the harder it will be for us to do 2 things: 1) learn from it; and 2) try again.***

Success V. Freedom

Take Action: Confine your conclusions and, as I say, your shame, to the iteration; don't, by rote, spin off into an abyss of life-long character judgments nor, necessarily, what a lost cause you are at *'this'*. Relegating your conclusions to the effort rather than to your essential nature is definitely a healthier, if not more correct, way to engage with (the game of) life.

Exercise: Pick 3 failures that are still weighing you down. List the conclusions you have previously drawn about yourself (character, capabilities, life) as a result of each failure. Rescind these conclusions by writing over-top of them in big capital letters: "NOT NECESSARILY TRUE". Now circumscribe your failures as much as possible – that means draw the most specific (non-global) conclusions you can about each failure. Finally answer this question in relation to each: what is still undetermined at the end of each failure *because success, even if it does exist, exists farther down this same road?*

Part One:

Three failures that are still weighing me down:	Conclusions I made about myself as a result of these failures:
1.	
2.	
3.	

Part Two:

Repeat: “*I take back these conclusions because they’re not necessarily true.*”

Now write, “NOT NECESSARILY TRUE” over the top of the conclusions.

Part Three:

3 new SUPER-SPECIFIC-TOTALLY-RELATED-TO-THE-PARTICULAR-SITUATION conclusions that <i>are</i> safe, and logical, to conclude as a result of the above failures:
1
2
3

Part Four:

Thinking about it now, this is still undetermined at the end the failure because success, if it does exist, <i>exists farther down this same road:</i>
1.
2.
3.

REVIEW. “Life is a successive unfolding of success from failure.” inasmuch as every effort proceeding success will invariably be to some extent a failure. **Life, really lived, is comprised of these iterations.** Redress your understanding or definition of failure: a failure is a try that didn’t work. You have a few options: regret trying or applaud yourself for trying; let the failure give you enough reason to sit down and step out of the ring indefinitely, or learn from it in order to improve the next try, the next iteration. Don’t pretend that sitting on the sidelines is the reasonable, rational and objective thing to do. Try instead, in the name of logic and reason, to contain the result of your effort to the iteration. *Just because you didn’t yet doesn’t mean you can’t.* It may mean you won’t, but that is entirely still unknown and totally up to you.

Choose to be to be proud of and/or applaud yourself for making an effort/putting yourself out there, instead of embarrassed by the particular iteration. And choose, if it is a thing you still want to do, to try again. Liberating yourself from the fear of error, or of making a mistake, and committing to simply failing better, will give you the confidence and courage to do so. Remember also the alternative: to take an indefinite seat. And this alternative, far from sparing you further shame and indignity, serves up an even greater humiliation: your own lack of belief in yourself. When you get knocked down, and decide not to get up again - I don’t care how ‘good’ your reasons are - you send yourself an extremely clear message which reads: I am unworthy of even my own support; so much so, that *I will not even back another try.* Worse than someone else, and even everyone else, saying we are a bad bet, is our own agreement that it is so. The message cuts like absolute and total abandonment from the one being on this planet whose esteem I *actually* need and value the most, because it is. Find a way to say, ‘I believe in you enough to give the energy, time and attention for another try. I love you enough to (re)invest, and allow you to fail better the next time.’ Make it your *rote* way of being.

**Other titles by Catherine Collaunt, Ph.D.
available at www.catherinecollaunt.com/shop/**

On Faith. Or Why You Don't Live Without It.

On Having One Life. Or What's True About Reincarnation.

On Magic and Miracles. Or Walking Through
A Land Of Wonders, Unwondering.

On Selfishness. Or Why A Rose Is Not Selfish
Because It Wants To Be A Rose.

a dream is half a prophecy