



## Picking Yourself Up After Failure

One of the most serious problems that keep people from making significant changes, reaching their dreams, or achieving their goals is how they process failure. Recently my granddaughter learned to walk. In the process she fell down hundreds of times. But instead of this discouraging her, she got right back up and tried again.

Many of us get stuck because we're scared of falling down again or we stay stuck because we're unable to move past our pain, regrets, or guilt over past failures.

But if you want to grow as a person toward greater emotional and spiritual wholeness, it is absolutely critical that you be willing to try new things and embrace challenges. **Failure is not a statement about you. It's a statement about what happened.**

Below are five steps that will help you move through failure in a healthy way.

**DON'T GIVE UP** Kathryn Stockett, author of the NY Times best-selling novel, *The Help*, didn't give up writing her novel in spite of receiving 60 rejection letters. Rather than get discouraged after all those rejections, she got determined and reworked and rewrote her story evaluating every critique and criticism to improve her writing.

What would have happened to her dream if she told herself, "I can't do it. I give up?" Thankfully she persevered and the 61st letter she received was the acceptance letter she worked so hard for.

There are many individuals throughout history who have pushed through rejection, failures, discouragement and seemingly impossible odds. Abraham Lincoln is one of the most famous. After losing numerous elections as well as many personal setbacks, eventually he became the President of the United States and changed American history.

Don't give up. You'll never know what could have been if you stop trying.

**TAKE RESPONSIBILITY** One of the most important skills we must learn if we want to be happy is how to take responsibility for our choices and recalculate. Otherwise we usually repeat the same mistakes again and again wondering why this is happening to us, often blaming others, God, and life circumstances instead of looking at ourselves.

To take responsibility for our own actions does not necessarily mean we take full blame for something, although this is often why many of us avoid taking responsibility. Perhaps a more helpful way of thinking about taking responsibility is to call it ownership.

What part of your failures do you need to own? What part did you play? How have you contributed to where things are right now? These are important questions that we must ask ourselves if we want to learn from our mistakes and move forward.

Things don't just "happen" to us. We have an important part to play, and owning them helps us learn those lessons and take steps toward positive changes.

**STOP BEATING YOURSELF UP** Owning your mistakes is not the same thing as beating yourself up for them. Taking responsibility helps you grow and learn. Beating yourself up just makes you feel guilty and ashamed.

We all have regrets. Things that we wished we would have done or known. You must be able to get over them and move on. One of failure's lessons is accepting your limitations and making the adjustments to capitalize on your strengths.

When I was in school, math was never my strong suit. I didn't exactly fail advanced algebra, but let's just say I didn't do well. I took responsibility for what I could do (which was study hard), but I also stopped beating myself up for not being capable of grasping advanced math concepts. Knowing my limitations however, helped me switch gears academically and move toward a better career path.

**RECOGNIZE YOU HAVE BLIND SPOTS** When my daughter was first learning to drive, I warned her over and over again to make sure she checked her mirrors and looked before she changed lanes. I didn't want her to get into an accident because she didn't realize that an entire car can hide in our car's blind spot.

People have blind spots too. Once you recognize what yours are, you can be more careful and not take stupid risks.

Our biggest blind spots come from our own pride and self-deception. It makes us unwilling to take responsibility because we don't want to see that we were at fault. It makes us unwilling to learn, because we already know everything.

Psychologists have identified a common blind spot that goes something like this. "I'm the lone exception to the rule." In other words, I can play with fire, but I won't be the one to get burned. I

can drink and drive, but I won't get into an accident. I can take this risk, but I won't have to pay the price.

Don't forget to look for your blind spots when making important decisions. If you don't, failure often is the result.

**ASK FOR HELP** Once we can take responsibility and identify our personal blind spots, we realize that we need help and invite other's to speak into our lives. Proverbs says, "Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life." (Proverbs 19:20)

No one becomes successful entirely on his own. All of the greatest leaders in the world had people behind and along side of them who helped them get there and encouraged them to get back up when they fell down. Do you think the apostle Paul could have done all he did without the support and help from Barnabas, Timothy or Titus?

Surround yourself with people who are a little further along on the journey. Studies show that when people are looking to make a significant change, it helps to have supportive others that will cheer us on and bandage our bruises

From now on, don't let failure stop you. Instead, learn from it to discover the necessary stepping stones that will lead you to make the changes that lead to success.