

10 COPING STRATEGIES

When You Are
Reeling From Failure

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
10 Coping Strategies When Reeling From Failure	2
Embrace Your Emotions In A Healthy Way	2
Don't Medicate With Food And Alcohol	3
Practice Simple Coping Skills.....	3
Understand What The Failure Means.....	4
Reframe The Failure	5
Place Responsibility Appropriately.....	6
Find Inspiration From Those Who Have Failed On Their Way To Success.....	7
Make A Plan To Move On	9
Conquer Your Fear Of Failure.....	9
Summary	11

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Introduction

Failure is a fact of life. It's impossible for anyone to go through existence succeeding at every turn. In fact, many of history's most famous success stories have come about after first having failed. The important thing is learning from the experience.

Failures can be small and insignificant, completely life altering and everything in between but learning to cope with the inevitable is important. When you fail to reach an important goal, you can be left feeling depressed, demoralized, and often stressed out as to what this loss now means.



10 Coping Strategies When Reeling From Failure

Embrace Your Emotions In A Healthy Way

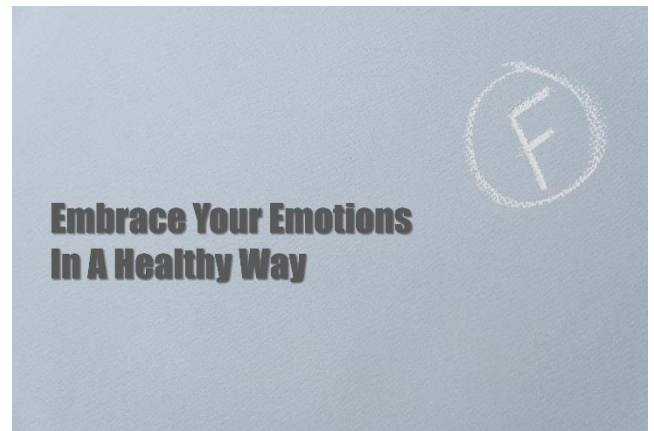
In the immediate aftermath of a big failure emotions are raw and painful. An individual can be wracked with self-doubt, depression, and anger. It is important at this stage to acknowledge to yourself how this failure is making you feel.

A January 2020 article written by psychotherapist Margaret Cullen entitled “The Real Danger of Suppressing Your Emotions” has some helpful advice. Cullen believes that unleashing the full force

of your emotions can be harmful to relationships but repressing the emotion can be far worse.

Margaret Cullen feels a regulated approach is the best option where an individual allows themselves to experience the emotions but makes an effort not to direct those emotions at others.

They should also not try to deny the emotions. Accept that the failure causes sadness and anger, talk to friends and family about how you feel if they want to help. It will take some time for the emotions to settle but don't try to suppress how you feel.



Don't Medicate With Food And Alcohol

When people feel sad or down, they often look for a distraction, something that can make them feel better and forget how they feel. This can often take the shape of overeating bad foods or drinking alcohol to excess.

WebMD says that stress, anger, and sadness can often drive individuals to overeat in order to soothe their emotions.

Stress eating as it is sometimes called can often be an almost unconscious decision to eat or drink more than you normally would. The first indication most people get that they are emotionally eating is the feeling of being uncomfortably full.

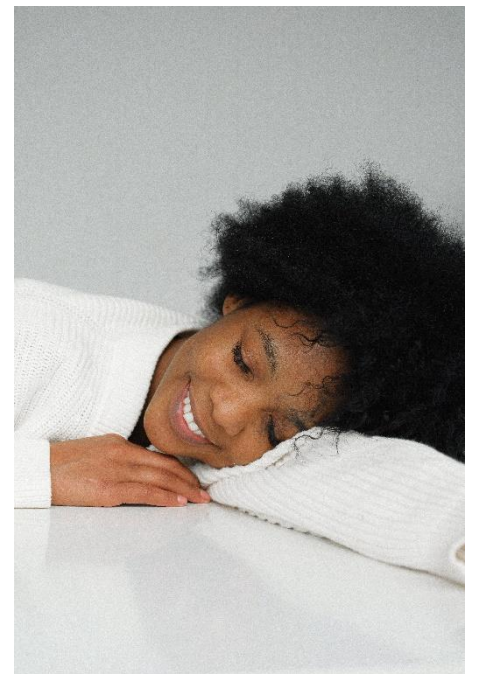
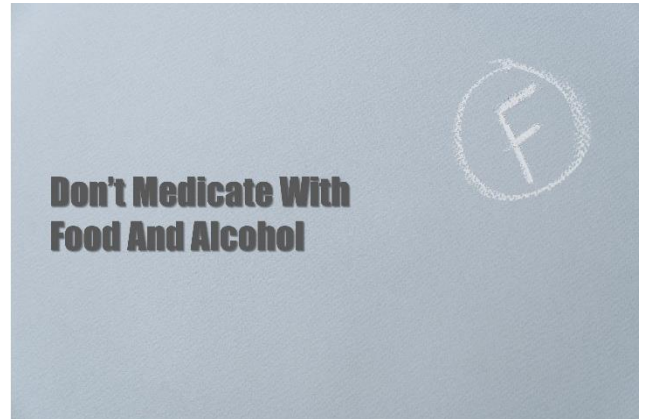
This indicates that they have been mindlessly eating when not actually hungry. It is suggested that before you sit down to eat you first should assess how you are feeling emotionally.

Acknowledge if you feel sad and realize that the food or drink will only make you feel better for a short time at best.

Alcohol should never be used as a coping strategy especially when feelings of depression are already in play. The thought of being drunk and forgetting for a while may seem logical but ultimately alcohol is a depressant the feelings will come back once you're sober.

Practice Simple Coping Skills

When life seems to have blown up because of a huge failure that has left a feeling of depression and despair it's sometimes the simple things that make it better.



Focusing on all the small things in life that are good and positive helps to counterbalance the feelings of loss and disappointment caused by the lack of success. Something as simple as taking a walk in the fresh air maybe with a dog or some friends can lift emotions.

Carving out time to read a good book or to take a shower or bath to give a feeling of rejuvenation is very therapeutic. Everyone has their own ways of relaxing and enjoying themselves so doing these little things to bring some joy in times of distress is very beneficial. Additionally, the more time is filled with happiness the less time is spent dwelling on the failure.

Here are a few ideas:

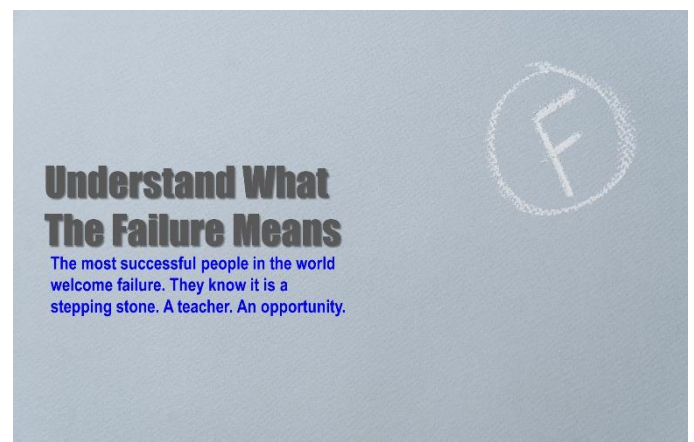
- Get exercise
- Spending time with friends
- Indulging in a hobby
- Spending time with a Pet
- Volunteering at a Charity

Understand What The Failure Means

The literal definition of failure is a lack of success and this can be such a broad interpretation because of the many levels of failure. A missed shot in a basketball game is a failure as is a failing grade on an important exam.

There are so many levels of failure that each is unique and has its own consequences or lack of. The truth is sometimes a failure isn't as huge as first thought, a failed job interview doesn't mean there won't be another chance.

It is important once emotions have settled to take time and assess what the failure actually means. Is it really a huge life destroying setback?



Does it make you any less that you did not succeed in this instance?

A failure can often in the moment feel like it's going to ruin everything when in truth it isn't that earth shattering. Placing it in perspective and realizing how significant or insignificant the failure really is can be the key to moving on.

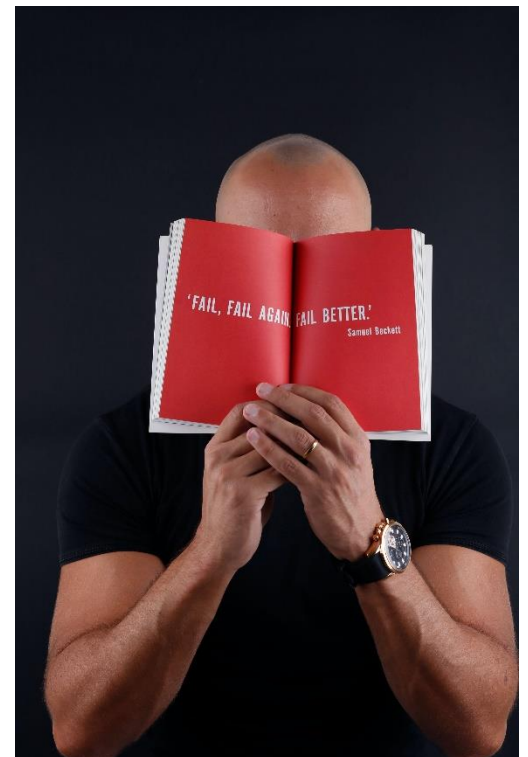
So, create a list of what you actually lost or missed out on due to this failure. Creating a visual representation of the true impact may make it more clear that the situation isn't actually as bad as once thought.

Reframe The Failure

The immediate reaction to a failure is a slew of negative emotions because something that was wanted has now been taken away. A great way to deal with this is to reframe the situation by a literal refocusing of the failure to see the positives that can come from it.

It may seem impossible that there are any positives in failing at something but it is all about perception.

- Shift the focus that something has gone wrong and consider what this failure can actually teach.
- Assess what may have caused the failure and what could have been done differently.
- What can be learned from the situation to ensure success in the future?



The most successful people in the world welcome failure, they know it is a stepping stone, a teacher, an opportunity.

Making a conscious effort to not dwell in self pity but to rather try and use this as a growth opportunity can be a very solid way of coping with and understanding failure.

Place Responsibility Appropriately

So much can go into the success or failure of any venture no matter the size so when things do not go as planned something or someone is to blame. It is important when analyzing the mechanics that went into the failure to not overlook the facts and to not allow emotion to play a part.

So very easily people can blame themselves for something they did not have complete control over. Carrying a feeling of sadness and worthlessness into the aftermath of the failure can see people punish themselves unnecessarily for situations that are far beyond their control. It is important that they cut themselves a break.



It is also possible that people may look to apportion blame to others or situations which are not at fault. Using too many excuses can lead to a missed learning opportunity which in turn misses the chance for personal growth.

- List the facts of the failure? What went wrong?
- What could have been done differently?
- What was under your control?
- What was beyond your control?

The key is to deeply analyze what happened and place the blame where it belongs. Create a list of all the things that may have contributed to the failure and be as honest as you can.

This visual aid can help you assess what was in your control and what was not. Having done this, do not direct anger but instead use it as motivation to do better and succeed in the future.

Find Inspiration From Those Who Have Failed On Their Way To Success

The hardest part of coping with failure is a feeling that success will never be achieved. This is a false assumption because almost everyone who has ever been massively successful stumbled along the way and faced failure.

Do some research into famous people who have failed time again before succeeding. There are plenty of them to be found.

In fact, those who achieve success are those who will take failure as a chance to learn and grow. Use the stories of those who have faced adversity and won to inspire a recovery from personal disappointment.

“There is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction.” - Oprah Winfrey

Here are a few remarkable stories to get you started:

You know that little chicken spot, called Kentucky Fried Chicken? Well the founder Colonel Sanders was 62 when he and his startup of \$105 in the form of a social security check finally got someone to accept his idea, after more than 1000 rejections.

Steven Spielberg, Hollywood director whose movies have grossed \$9 billion + and yielded him 3 Academy Awards, was twice denied entry into the University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts.

Thomas Edison, who holds 1,000 + patents and invented the electric lamp was told by his teachers that he was ‘too stupid to learn anything’.



"I think it's important to have a good hard failure when you're young... Because it makes you kind of aware of what can happen to you. Because of it I've never had any fear in my whole life when we've been near collapse and all of that. I've never been afraid." Walt Disney

Stephen King, the master crafter of dozens of best sellers has his first book Carrie (one of his biggest sellers) rejected 30 times.

Today, you can't buy a Van Gogh painting for less than \$100 million, when he was alive, he could not give them away and he only sold one, The Red Vineyard.

Michael Jordan, one of the greatest, if not the greatest professional basketball players of all time was cut from his high school basketball team.

"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." - Michael Jordan

Reassess

After all the soul searching that has taken place to analyze the failure, make time to reassess what is most important in life. The time spent reeling from failure can be enlightening and open your eyes to what truly brings you happiness and contentment. It is possible that a career path that once seemed like a dream now looks like a nightmare. Perhaps that business venture is still a dream that you cannot let go.

Make a list of all the good and bad things in your life. Really assess how important certain things are to you whether life would be better or worse without them.

Consider the thing that failed. Is it something that you still really want? If the thing that you failed at still looks worth pursuing then prepare to carry on and make an alternate plan to achieve it. However, if it no longer seems worth the heartache then maybe it's time to set new goals and take a different path. Reassessing and replanning is not giving up, it is setting a journey that aligns with your values in the moment.

Make A Plan To Move On

Once the failure has been analyzed and relived over and over to come to terms with it, the next step is to move on. Dwelling on what cannot be changed is not a healthy use of time but planning for the future can be reinvigorating.

It's time to make a new plan. If you missed out on one job, what is the next one that can be applied for?

Things have been learned from missing out on the first attempt so what can be altered to make the second try successful?

Take all of the lessons of failure along with a new found drive to succeed this time and forge forward.



Conquer Your Fear Of Failure

Once that first big failure has happened and been successfully navigated, coping strategies will hopefully have you prepared going forward. The truth is that failure is inevitable and it may well happen again before success has been reached.

So as life continues on it's important to use some strategies to lessen the fear of failure. This is important because not gaining control of this fear can lead to a reluctance to take chances in the future.

- When entering into something that may not succeed, assess all the possible outcomes. In doing this the element of shock that potential failure wields can be lessened.
- The next step is to work on positive thinking both with regards to the chance of success and how well you are now equipped to deal with failure.



- Another way to decrease the fear of failure is to make sure the worst-case scenario is understood. What is the worst that can possibly happen if this attempt is failed?
- Finally, make sure there is a back up plan, something that can act as a landing pad should this latest attempt not work out.

Summary

Dealing with the effects of a confidence shaking failure is not always easy especially if it feels like life has now been ruined. These emotions are temporary, however, and as long as a healthy approach to handling this sense of grief is taken these emotions can be easily navigated.

The old saying goes “If you fall off the horse, get back in the saddle” and it is a great lesson in life. Failure is not an excuse to give up, merely a lesson in how to succeed.

