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Quotable Quotes

"I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward." ~ Thomas Edison, inventor

"Fail forward fast." ~ Tom Peters, business guru

"Develop success from failures. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest stepping stones to success." - Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

Dear Jean,

Our featured writer this month is Dr. Bob Grassberger. He is the managing partner of SRD, Economic Consulting. SRD is primarily engaged in agricultural development and arid lands research. Bob is also a lecturer for Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology at the University of New Mexico where he teaches courses related to human capital development and organizational learning.

Bob has been a friend and colleague for several years now and introduced through a mutual friend as we share a connection having both attended the Community High School in Mascoutah, IL. The chance meeting and introduction at an ISPI meeting in Albuquerque, NM only proves how small our worlds can be. Bob lives as a true entrepreneurial spirit and does it effortlessly! I know for sure his topic is a true gift he shares with others - one fails, one learns, one grows! Thanks, Bob, for these insights and the sharing of your gift.

In the spirit of sharing our gifts,

The Value of Failure by Bob Grassberger

Perhaps you've heard of the 10,000 hour rule? It's the idea that becoming a top expert takes 10,000 hours of practice on average. What most of us don't realize is that the 10,000 hours of practice must be "deliberate" practice. Deliberate practice is effortful - you must challenge and stretch your abilities. To practice deliberately you must be willing to experiment (try new things), to risk failure, and to reflect on the outcomes.

The result of deliberate practice is learning and experience. But the journey to expertise ultimately begins with a willingness to fail.



Several years ago I was delivering a workshop in rural Jordan. My host provided a glowing introduction and concluded, "We love to work with Dr. Bob because he has done so many things wrong." Cultural and language barriers aside, what he was intending to convey was that much of the value we bring to our clients comes from having made the inevitable mistakes that we all invariably make, overcoming those mistakes and extracting the lessons. That learning (perhaps wisdom) when conveyed, helps others to avoid similar failures.

If you think deeply about the lessons that have been the most important in your life, you will probably find that failure has often been a central catalyst. Failure and learning fit hand in glove. Getting that math problem wrong caused you to go back and learn how to do it right, stammering through your presentation while you dripped sweat caused you to learn how to speak in public, failing to get that promotion caused you to learn new skills. As an army of inventors have shown us, failure is just part of the process that we all go through. Seeing our failures as an opportunity to learn rather than a barrier to success is critical to building expertise.

Tools and Resources FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Celebrating Failure: The Power of Taking Risks, Making Mistakes and Thinking Big by Ralph Heath

Heath is a motivational speaker and CEO. This is a fun book written in that motivational vein. If you are looking for an academic text on making the most of your mistakes, this isn't it. But, if you just want an attitudinal tune up that provides a new perspective on how to derive benefit from failing you will find this a good read.

Spikes Guide to Success: Stupid, Unlucky and Rich by Richard St. John

Again, more attitudinal than academic but one of my favorite books to just pick up and read whatever page it falls open to. Only one part of the book is based on how to deal with failure but St. John's 8 Success Factors make you think. If you want to get a quick overview of St. John and his book, watch his 2005 6 minute TED talk.

Learning from Failure: Failing by Design in the April 2011 Harvard Business Review. Rita Gunther McGrath

McGrath focuses on how organizational leaders can learn from inevitable failures that occur in the workplace. The author provides 7 principles for failing intelligently. She also points out that failure should not be the objective...just that when it happens we should learn from it.

THE INTERNET CONNECTIONS

The links that follow are two TED talks that I found compelling. The first is about learning from failure. The second is about risk taking.

[Eddie Obeng: Smart failure for a fast-changing world](#)

[Matt Cutts: Try something new for 30 days](#)

Reflection

While failure is something we seek to avoid, it is an inherent part of life. If you haven't experienced a recent failure you are probably not trying anything new. The takeaway here is that when we do suffer failure we need to see it as an opportunity to learn (and perhaps to teach others) rather than as something debilitating. We must fail intelligently by using failure as feedback. Dissect your mishaps and use them to learn and grow. A personal journal is an excellent place to reflect on the lessons from your failures. Choose to reflect your lessons in writing. Review those lessons periodically. If appropriate share what you have learned with others.

Choose To

...see failure as an unexpected outcome in our larger journey as it becomes one step along the path...know that we are all different and perceive failure differently...learn from those unexpected outcomes...have more ideas (a key characteristic of successful inventors)...know that most of these ideas fail and a few become successful...be open to trying many new things...conduct 'intentional experiments' that allow you to explore new things but make sure they are calculated risks that will provide using learning...understand what the risks might be in your experiments...reflect on your failures so the result is learning.



Administrivia

My Constructive Choices Audience...

- * Professionals wanting to be at choice in their career and daily work,
- * New managers (and aspiring leaders) transitioning to establish a leadership role in their communities,
- * Individuals wanting to sort through the choices, build a more fulfilling life, live their voices, and...
- * Coaches who choose to step out, show up, and say - YES, it IS all about YOU!

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