

Failure 201—Failure, Shame vs. Guilt, and Forgiveness

Principles From Failure101

#1—Mistakes Are Okay, Survivable, and Necessary For Me to Grow.

- False belief—"I shouldn't make any mistakes."
- Failure is not the opposite of success. It is different stages of the same journey.
- Are you playing to win or are you playing NOT to lose?
- "Keep in mind that our community is not composed of those who are already saints, but of those who are trying to become saints. Therefore let us be extremely patient with each other's faults and failures." Mother Teresa
- "If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate." Thomas Watson of IBM.
- Over-generalizing mistakes impacts your self-concept
- It's important to learn to have an accurate self-concept.
- Self-compassion and empathy is the primary ingredient to bounce back. "Other people I respect have failed and survived. I can too." It address the emotional part of failure, not just the cognitive.

#2—Shame vs. Guilt—Mistakes Are An Event, Not a Person

The Story of Dorothy from *The Blessing*:

"During the first day of an introductory speech class, the teacher was going around the room, having the students introduce themselves. Each student was to respond to the questions "What do I like about myself?" and "What don't I like about myself?"

Nearly hiding at the back of the room was Dorothy. Her long, red hair hung down around her face, almost obscuring it from view. When it was Dorothy's turn to introduce herself, there was only silence in the room. Thinking perhaps she had not heard the question, the teacher moved his chair over near hers and gently repeated the question. Again, there was only silence.

Finally, with a deep sigh, Dorothy sat up in her chair, pulled back her hair, and in the process revealed her face. Covering nearly all of one side of her face was a large, irregularly shaped birthmark—nearly as red as her hair. "That," she said, "should show

you what I don't like about myself."

Moved with compassion, this godly professor leaned over and gave her a hug. Then he kissed her on her cheek where the birthmark was and said, "That's OK, Honey, God and I still think you're beautiful."

Dorothy cried uncontrollably for almost twenty minutes. Soon other students had gathered around her and were offering their comfort as well. When she finally could talk, as she dabbed the tears from her eyes she said to the professor, "I've wanted so much for someone to hug me and say what you said. Why couldn't my parents do that? My mother won't even touch my face."

1. False belief—"My mistakes prove that I am a bad person."
2. Shame & Guilt Defined: "While guilt is a painful feeling of regret and responsibility for one's actions, shame is a painful feeling about oneself as a person." Fossum and Mason *Facing Shame*.
3. Those lacking self-esteem overgeneralize their failures to conclude that they are just plain less intelligent and less competent than others. Paradoxically, the best way to build self-esteem is to take action after falling down which builds a reserve of personal efficacy.
4. Shame says "I fail because I'm a failure. There really is no other option."
5. The Purple Bumblebee syndrome. "Nobody can make me feel inferior without my consent."—Eleanor Roosevelt. There needs to be a pre-existing negative belief for insults or mistakes to affect you negatively.
6. "Remember that in order to recover as an artist, you must be willing to be a bad artist. Give yourself permission to be a beginner. By being willing to be a bad artist, you have a chance to *be* an artist, and perhaps, over time, a very good one."—The Artist's Way
7. You overcoming shame by telling others.

#3—Forgiveness Is A Necessary Part of Failure

1. False belief: "I don't want to let someone off the hook for their mistakes (including myself)."
2. Forgiveness is hard because we are called to forgive AND hold people accountable.
3. We usually use un-forgiveness as a way to motivate ourselves. That doesn't work because it triggers the flight, fight or freeze response.
4. People wounded by friends and co-workers may lose faith in their own judgment.—How could I have chosen this person as a friend? But Family and

spouses usually cause the greatest hurts. Intimate injuries alter our perception of reality—God, trust, ourselves, etc...

5. "People who hurt their spouses challenge their victim's assumptions about what control a person really has over their destiny, how much trust one can put in another's ability.
6. "Children harmed by parents may come to rely solely on themselves for their survival or well-being. A child may never again see people as sources of safety or intimacy."

The Cost of Not Forgiving

1. Not forgiving, resentment and revenge cost us more than the one who's hurt us.
2. "Countless individuals are satisfied to go on resenting and hating people who wrong them. They stew in their own inner poisons and even contaminate those around them. Forgivers, on the other hand, are not content to be stuck in a quagmire. They reject the possibility that the rest of their lives will be determined by the unjust and injurious acts of another person. Instead, people who forgive take risks to reshape their lives into something freed from past pain."
3. "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."
Nelson Mandela
4. "Always forgive your enemies - nothing annoys them so much." Oscar Wilde