FAILURE IS YOUR FRIEND

EMBRACE YOUR MISTAKES

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"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."- **Albert Einstein**

We often think of failure as a dirty word, a terrible thing. We're taught this from early on as children in school, and that same ridiculous idea continues into the world of our working life. Whether it's a bad grade on a book report, a failed experiment in science class or being fired from a job because a project didn't turn out the way the boss wanted, failure is punished and looked down on. **It shouldn't be.**

Does that seem like a crazy thing to say, that failure *shouldn't* be looked down on? Then let me really sound insane and say this: **failure should be embraced**.

Why would I say that? What possible *good* could come out of something so "bad" as failure? That's the focus of this report, so let's get into it.

FAIL FAST, FAIL OFTEN

As a software developer and guy who has run a successful business for more than ten years, I fail a lot. I'll think of some "great new idea" and immediately start pounding away at the keyboard to kick out a quick script or app to see if my idea works like I think it will. Most of the time it doesn't (yeah, most of the time). It fails.

Do I feel bad about that? **NO WAY!** Because sometimes that idea I had turns out to be something **amazing** that works really well. And that amazing idea turns into amazing profits for my company.

But if I wasn't willing to give each idea I have a quick try – and equally willing to see that attempt fail – I would never have found the big successes.

There's a famous quote from Thomas Edison, who is well-known for having tried many, *many* different ways to create a working light bulb before finally discovering the one that worked well. "I have not failed," he said, "I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." **So true.**

Don't be afraid of failure. Fail fast and fail often. Because the sooner you realize that something wont work, the quicker you move onto the next thing, then the next, and the next until you find the one that will.

But that's not the only reason to embrace failure. Failure is a great teacher, as the next section of this report will discuss.

FAILURE IS A GREAT TEACHER

Think about all of the thousands of times Thomas Edison failed to produce a working light bulb. Do you think he walked away from all of those attempts empty-handed? **I promise you he did not.** I guarantee you he learned a huge amount about light bulbs and filaments and electricity from all of those failed attempts.

The same is true of any failure that you might experience. Sure, you didn't accomplish your goal, but that doesn't mean you didn't accomplish *anything*. At the very least you learned how not to do something. But you usually learn a lot more than that. You learn a lot of additional facts and details about how something does (or doesn't) work.

That's incredibly valuable information! The next time you try, you'll be armed with all of that additional knowledge, and that will push you a little closer to success. Each time you fail, you learn. Each time you learn, you get closer to success. Success is like the top of a long staircase, and each step of that staircase is a failure that you learned from and stepped up on to get closer to the top.

I just don't get the corporate world. It typically asks people to try and find out how to accomplish a goal, but when the goal is not immediately achieved it punishes the people trying. Man, that's a horrible incentive! The corporate world needs to learn to embrace failure rather than punishing it.

Why do I say that? The next section will explain.

LETTING FAILURE TEACH YOU WHEN TO QUIT

Dr. Phil McGraw is a popular psychologist in the United States. I saw his television show once where he gave some advice that should be obvious to anyone but is often ignored: "If what you're doing isn't working, *do something else!*"

Sounds simple right? But it's advice that's rarely heeded. You see, once a person gets invested in an idea, they often latch onto it and keep at it and keep at it no matter what. Why do we do that? Because we're taught that failure is bad, shameful, and if you give up and stop trying then "you're a failure".
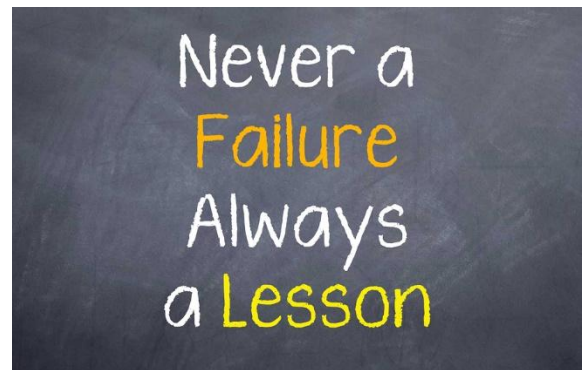
How stupid! Like the corporate world that continually punishes failure, all that does is teach people that they should keep at something that doesn't work until they go insane! The corporations lose more money because people are afraid of the punishment that will come if they fail, and individuals keep working at things that are clearly not going to succeed! It's a ridiculous waste of time and resources.

I say let failure teach you *when to quit*. Don't be a quitter – some things are hard and require perseverance – but know *when* to quit. Failure can teach you that if you let it.

That's why I said to "fail fast and fail often". Don't get overly invested in ideas that don't take off from the early stages. An idea's failure to work in the early stages is often a sign that either the idea isn't so great or the implementation isn't so great. Whether you need to try a new way of tackling the idea or scrap the idea entirely is something you have to figure out for yourself, **but you must figure it out!**

At the beginning of this report I quoted Albert Einstein, who famously defined insanity as: "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

That is so true. Don't be an insane person. Embrace failure. Let it teach you when to quit, and let it teach you quickly so you don't waste too much time on a bad idea.

That's not to say that you should go around chasing every shiny new object to come along. You know I'm completely against that. If you're going to buy into an idea or a system or a method of doing something, work it the way you're supposed to (no short cuts!) and analyze the results. If the results show even some promise, then tweak and refine the process to see if you can improve on those results.

But if the results are a complete failure, then it's time to move on. It can be hard to let go of something you're vested in, but you really need to learn how to just let go. The faster you learn the right way to fail, the quicker you'll climb the staircase to success.

And here's to YOUR success!

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