

Failure CAN Be a Viable Option

By: Dick Kuiper

I'm sure we've all seen movies showing macho football coaches yelling at his players, shouting "Failure is not an option!" Many of us have also heard it in the business world from bosses who believe it to be a good way to motivate subordinates to work harder. The effects of such ranting, whether it be in the locker room or the board room, are almost always opposite of what was intended.



The fear of failure, and even the fear of being wrong, is not the motivator that many old school thinkers believe it to be. Yet it is ingrained in most of us since birth. We got it from our parents. We got it from our teachers. We get it from our bosses. We also get it from each other, and yes, we even get it from ourselves.

We Are Not Doomed to Failure

So, here's the good news – none of us is doomed to failure. Better yet, failure is not fatal. We can unlearn what has been drilled into us.



Enlightened teachers and managers can gradually reverse the fear of failure in their charges with no more than adding a dose of reality to their reward systems.

How many parents and teachers assume a staunch negative position whenever they see a grade less than an "A" on a report card? How many bosses express debilitating anger when the performance of a subordinate falls short of a target? Failure must be seen as an essential part of the learning process.

Our report cards in school, and now our performance reviews at work provide us with uplifting feedback on only ONE condition – achieving the maximum end result.

Even when we do not reach the targeted goal, we still typically achieve some positive things like putting forth effort that exceeds expectations, improving over past performance and most importantly, learning new things. All too often, these achievements are disregarded.

The Growth Mindset

So what is this magical "dose of reality" I mentioned above all about? It involves a rather simple change in mindset. Not just a coincidence, *Mindset* is the name of a book written by Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck after years of research on achievement and

success. Ms. Dweck explains the difference between the traditional “now” mindset and a refreshing “not yet” mindset.

The “not yet” mindset gives recognition for effort and improvement even when a person falls short of a targeted goal. In reality, we should perhaps make improvement a goal by itself. Dweck calls it a “growth mindset” since it recognizes upward movement along a learning curve. Adopting a growth mindset creates motivation and productivity in the worlds of business, education, and sports.



Still not convinced that failure is not a viable option?

A Blast from the Past

Let's take a quick look back at history.



Mickey Mantle, the famous New York Yankee home run hitter, achieved a lifetime batting average of 300, making him one of the all-time greatest baseball players. Yet, look at the facts, being a 300 hitter means you get a hit 3 out of every 10 times you get up to bat. Conversely, it also means you fail 7 out of every 10 tries. Still pissed off about that one “C” you got on that report card years ago?

And don't forget, Thomas Edison once said, “I have not failed, I just found 1,000 ways it won't work.”

Adopt Your Own Growth Mindset

If you often have a fear of failing at something, I suggest you pick up a copy of *Mindset* by Carol Dweck and give it a serious read. When you're setting or reviewing performance goals at your place of work, a quick refresher of the Growth Mindset is a great exercise. It should be mandatory reading for parents and teachers as well. Who knows, your child could “grow” up to be a 300 hitter.

About the author

Dick Kuiper has been doing freelance writing and ghost writing for years for clients all across North America. He has written hundreds of articles, blog posts, web content pages, marketing collateral pieces, brochures, technical manuals, speeches and a great deal more. He has written five books both as an author and as a ghost writer. Dick can be reached at dick@ghostwriterhelp.com or visit his website at www.ghostwriterhelp.com for more information.

