



Finding the Gift in "Failures"



It is not uncommon to practice a new skill or technique and find that things don't go the way you planned. Perhaps you are working on being more assertive and you miss a step when communicating a need to a loved one. Maybe you are working on active listening, but you get hooked by something someone said and completely shut down and begin defending yourself. Or maybe you are working on decreasing negative self-talk and you find yourself completely ignoring everything you learned about conquering these thoughts because you just can't seem to get over a particular trait you severely dislike about yourself. Whatever it is you are practicing, it is important to recognize that there will be bumps in the road along the path to self-discovery. It is critical you find the gift in these perceived failures, celebrate your successes (no matter how small), and identify your strengths in order for you to avoid getting stuck or going back to old behaviors that do not serve you.

Identifying Your Strengths

The first step is to identify your strengths. Think back to a recent event that didn't go as planned. Try to identify a time when you instantly knew that if you'd followed specific steps or applied a new skill you learned, it may have turned out differently.

Please Note:

- Do your best to write without judgment. There are no right or wrong answers.
- In the box labeled "Event" write where you were, what you were doing, how you responded, etc. Be descriptive and include any details that stand out to you.
- In the box labeled "Strengths" write down the things that you did that were positive. Were there behaviors that you normally displayed that you didn't this time? Did you quickly identify where the conversation went wrong? Were there other strengths that you showed that are part of your personality? Simply write anything you see that you did well or that was different from past behaviors.

| Event | Strengths |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Example: When I woke today, I looked in the mirror and told myself how fat, ugly, and old I was instead of doing my daily affirmation. Affirmations are stupid and don't matter anyway - no one will ever want me. I knew it was wrong to say these things, but I just wasn't feeling beautiful today.</i></p> | <p><i>Example: This time I at least recognized that I was wilfully rejecting daily affirmations. In the past, I would have simply thought the negative thoughts and went on with my day. I may have even stopped doing affirmations if I continued to feel low.</i></p> |



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Finding the Gifts

Next, we will use the event listed above to find the gifts from your perceived failure. It is very common to complete this exercise and recognize that while your failure may have negative consequences, you can find something to be grateful for and likely wouldn't change the experience if you could. Our greatest growth can come from some of our most difficult times if we allow it.

Tips:

- You may choose to do this exercise on a blank sheet of paper or you may turn it over if you need more space to write.
- In the box labeled "Negative Thoughts" write down any negative thoughts you had that harmed you in this situation.
- In the box labeled "Emotion" write down what emotions you were feeling that could have led you to these thoughts? Is there an event or situation adding to these emotions?
- In the box labeled "Evidence" write down what evidence you have to support that your negative thoughts are true. Write down what evidence you have that challenges your negative thoughts. What does the evidence show?
- In the box labeled "Reflection" write down how you feel now when you reflect back on the negative thoughts that you had. What did you learn from them?
- In the box labeled "Gifts" write down what gifts you can take from the situation. How did this situation help you grow? What insight can you take from the situation?
- In the box labeled "Challenge" write down a personal challenge you have for yourself next time you experience a similar situation.

| Negative Thoughts | Emotion | Evidence | Reflection | Gifts | Challenge |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Example: I am fat, ugly, and old. Affirmations are stupid and don't matter. No one will ever want me. I am wrong and bad for not feeling beautiful today.</p> | <p>Example: I have been feeling sad and unworthy since my boyfriend broke up with me. I am afraid no one will ever want to be with me.</p> | <p>Example: I am overweight but healthy. I have traits that I find beautiful. I am only 30 years old and I still have a lot of life to live. Affirmations can feel stupid, but they have helped me in the past. Having negative thoughts does not make me "wrong" or "bad". My negative thoughts are not true.</p> | <p>Example: I was just feeling low from the breakup and fearful about my future. I didn't feel like doing my affirmations. I learned that it is ok to allow myself to have bad days.</p> | <p>Example: This situation helped me see that I am still mourning the breakup. It also reminded me that everyone has bad days and gives in to negative thoughts sometimes. It doesn't make me wrong or bad and my feelings were not true.</p> | <p>Example: Next time I feel low, I will challenge myself to do affirmations even if I think they are dumb and even if I don't want to.</p> |



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Wrap Up

After completing this activity, what surprised you most?

How did it feel when you looked at your strengths and how they impacted the situation?

What was the most difficult thing for you while searching for the gifts from your failure?

In what ways did the experience you used in this activity help you grow?

How can reframing your mistakes and looking for the gift help you in the future?

What insight did you gain from this activity?

***"The most valuable thing you can make is a mistake - you can't learn anything from being perfect."
- Adam Osborne***