

Overcoming fear of failure

'Many of life's failures are people who did not realise how close they were to success when they gave up.'

Thomas Edison

(who tried over 2000 experiments before he managed to make the light bulb work)

If you never risk failure, you will never leave your personal comfort zone. Children risk failure all the time; imagine an infant never learning to walk because she'd fallen over a couple of times, or never learning to speak because the first sounds came out all funny. Yet as we get older, experiences may make us extremely fearful of failure – perhaps we've been told over and over again that we're hopeless, or we've been humiliated or hurt when we took risks.

It is important to understand that if you want to be successful at something, you have to go through some difficulty. As the saying goes, *'there's no gain without pain'*.

But failure is only a problem if you interpret it that way. If you try something and it doesn't work out as you intended, you can (if you want to be miserable) tell yourself: *'That proves just how useless I am. I should never have tried.'* But an alternative way of interpreting the same experience might be: *'That's interesting. So what should I do differently next time?'* Or in some cases: *'The situation was outside my control. Hopefully I'll have better luck next time.'*

Consider this story:

At age 22 he failed in business

At age 23 he ran for state legislature and lost

At age 24 he failed in business again

At age 26 his sweetheart died and he was broken-hearted

At age 27 he had a nervous breakdown

At age 34 he ran for Congress, and was defeated

At age 39 he ran for Congress again – and lost again

At age 46 he ran for the Senate – and lost his ticket

At age 47 he lost when he ran for Vice President

At age 49 he ran for the Senate – and was defeated again...

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At age 51 he ran and was elected to the office of President
of the United States
His name was Abraham Lincoln

