

REFRAME

**Change How You Think About
Self-Doubt & Fear**

REFRAME © 2021
www.imind.ca

The most important step in achieving success is learning not to fear failure. In fact, self-doubt and the fear of making a mistake can easily stop you from making any progress at all!

It may sound counterintuitive, but experts have found that failure is a significant aspect of success. The key is in how you respond.

The great American inventor Thomas Edison famously tried more than a thousand times to invent the light bulb. A thousand times! What would you think of someone who kept trying after ten times, or fifty or a hundred? Most of us would think that person was crazy to keep trying when it just wasn't working. But Edison persevered, and eventually, he came up with the idea that worked. And how did he feel about those failures? He didn't think they were failures at all. He said he had invented more than a thousand light bulbs that didn't work. He reframed what looked like failures as steps on the way to success and you can too.

Here are seven ways to reframe self-doubt and fear of failure and to set you on the path to success.

1. Work out where the fear is coming from

Fear is one of the fundamental human emotions, and when looking at survival, it has excellent value. Fear drives the fight or flight response. Learning to be fearful of bears and saber-toothed tigers came in very handy for staying alive back then! But nowadays such a level of fear is less useful and can harm your chances of success.

Do some thinking about what your fears are. What comes up when you visualize failure? Maybe it's the anger and disapproval of your parents or a teacher. That fear may have been a reasonable response when you were a child, but it's no longer serving your best interests.

A useful exercise is to imagine the worst-case scenario. If you ruin your presentation, or flunk your exam, or don't get promoted, what is likely to happen? Most of the time our failures are not life or death propositions. They may be disappointments or require some adjustment, but your life will go on!

Identify and confront the source of your fear. Put it into real-world perspective, and you'll find that a lot of the energy in it dispels.

2. Acknowledge and accept that you will fail

You should accept that failure is a given. It's almost impossible to make progress without making some mistakes. The mistakes may be big or small, but there will be missteps. Perhaps it's a presentation that didn't go so well, a problem with the data or a sale that fell through. But that's okay.

If you expect that at some point something you try will not work, you've already taken some of the negative energy out of failing. Self-doubt is part and parcel of the human condition. If you can think, you doubt. You need some level of humility, or you are likely to go off the rails. A healthy level of self-doubt is okay. What's not okay is when self-doubt takes over.

Overwhelming self-doubt and fear can plunge you into a depressive paralysis, too scared to take risks or make decisions. Part of becoming an adult is to learn to accept self-doubt and be able to take steps to defuse it.

3. Detach from the emotion of failure

A big element of reframing self-doubt is to be able to detach. Take the personal out of the story, and failure becomes a problem-solving, not a blaming exercise. A lot of emotions like shame and guilt, anger and disappointment are part and parcel of failure. Feel the emotions, acknowledge them and let them pass. Failure is not personal, so you shouldn't allow it to impact on your sense of self-worth.

Get some perspective on what happened and why and resolve to learn from your mistakes and not repeat them. So, you broke your diet or missed your yoga class, you ruined your presentation or made a mistake in your analysis. Acknowledge your mistake, learn from it and move on.

Accept failure as an element of business practice. It's just another risk, so make sure you make contingency plans to allow for things that may not be within your control.

See mistakes as a stepping stone on the way to success.

4. Build your cheer squad

Having a supportive network will help you build your self-confidence, support you through the tough times and celebrate your successes with you. There's nothing more empowering than having people saying they know you can do it, people who will be there for you no matter what. Having your cheer squad will boost your energy and keep your motivation high when you need it most.

Surrounding yourself with people whose views and advice you trust means you don't have to deal with problems alone. It also makes good business sense. Connect with the right people who can act as a sounding board. Look for mentors, coaches, and buddies who will give you the benefit of their wisdom and experience. And as you learn you can pay it forward to others who might need your help and advice. Build a positivity circle of friends, family, and colleagues.

5. Stop worrying about what other people think

You can't know what other people are thinking. It's a waste of time second-guessing other people's opinions of you. That will lock you into a circle of self-doubt and is likely to hold you back from trying anything new.

There will always be people who don't agree with your ideas or vision. And you have a choice about how you react to that. You can cut the skeptics loose and vow to show them a thing or two, or you can use their skepticism to test your ideas. See if there's a grain of truth in their criticism and if there is, act on it.

You should also stop comparing yourself to other people. You might look around you and see other people getting promotions, new jobs or having expensive holidays and think "what am I doing wrong?" But it's not a race. Everyone is on their journey. Someone else's achievement doesn't diminish your achievements.

The only person you should be comparing yourself with is you! Know yourself, celebrate your strengths and achievements and what is working for you, and don't worry about anyone else.

6. Keep your eye on the prize.

Sometimes you can get consumed by all the busyness and the detail. You can get cast down by a missed opportunity or an unexpected obstacle. That's when you need to look up and remember why you're doing all of this, why you're making those phone calls, having those meetings, writing those papers. Keep a clear line of sight to where you want all this effort to get you. It can help if you visualize how you want your life to look when you have achieved your goal. How do you want to feel? How will your life have changed?

Keeping your big goal in front of mind will help you focus on what you need to do right now. Each of the little or not-so-little things you do today build up, taking you closer and closer to success.

7. Celebrate all your successes, big and small.

If you find yourself overwhelmed by self-doubt, look back and see how much progress you've made. Every phone call, every sale, every meeting, every newsletter takes you a step closer to success.

It can help to make success visible. Use a planner or a whiteboard so you can highlight short, medium and long-term goals. Make a big deal of checking tasks off your to-do list and hitting your milestones. They are tangible proof that you are getting closer to achieving your big goal.

Celebrating your successes also helps to put those missteps into perspective. If you look back down the chain of progress, you'll recognize that a missed opportunity didn't derail the whole project. You might even see where that mistake helped you course-correct and make better progress than you might have otherwise.

By now you'll see that failure is just another part of life. It's natural to be imperfect, to make mistakes or forget things. By facing your fears, tackling your self-doubt, asking for help when you need it and keeping things in perspective you'll be able to take control of your life.

You also see that success is made up of hundreds, if not thousands of small actions. Some steps are successful, others not so much but each one is a stepping stone to achieving your big goal.

Nobody enjoys failing, not even Edison! But you can take steps to remove the sting out of failure. If you acknowledge that failure is a genuine possibility, you'll arm yourself with the ability to deal with it when it comes. You'll be able to react appropriately and take the right action. You won't lose momentum or confidence, and you'll bounce back more determined than ever.