

## Don't Let the Failure from Outside Get Inside You

What in your life have you considered to be the greatest source of frustration and failure? Think about that factor, and then list all the heartaches, pains, obstacles, and problems related to it. Write them here:

Difficulties	Fact/Action Needed
1. _____ _____	
2. _____ _____	
3. _____ _____	
4. _____ _____	
5. _____ _____	
6. _____ _____	
7. _____ _____	
8. _____ _____	

9. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now consider the items one at a time, and decide whether each is a fact of life (which you need to accept and then move beyond) or an item that requires positive action. For a fact of life, write “fact” next to the item, and determine to be positive despite the adversity. For any item needing action, in the space on the right-hand side, write down what you ought to do to create positive change in your life. Then vow to do it cheerfully.

## Overview of Steps to Failing Forward

### 1. Realize there is one major difference between average people and achieving people.

“The difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and response to failure. Nothing else has the same kind of impact on people’s ability to achieve and to accomplish whatever their minds and hearts desire.

### 2. Learn a new definition of failure.

The difference between greatness and mediocrity is often how an individual views a mistake. One of the greatest problems people have with failure is

that they are too quick to judge isolated situations in their lives and label them as failures. Instead, they need to keep the bigger picture in mind.

Changing your perspective on failure will help you to persevere—and ultimately achieve your desires. Remember:

1. You will learn lessons
2. There are not mistakes—only lessons.
3. A lesson is repeated until it is learned.
4. If you don't learn the easy lessons, they get harder. (Pain is one way the universe gets your attention.)
5. You'll know you've learned a lesson when your actions change.

You are the only person who can label what you do a failure.

### **3. Remove the “you” from failure.**

Failure isn't so bad if it doesn't attack the heart. Success is alright if it doesn't attack the head. (Grantland Rice)

Every successful person is someone who failed, yet never regarded himself as a failure.

### **4. Take action and reduce your fear.**

Fear makes come true that which one is afraid of. (Victor Fankl).

The first important step in weathering failure is learning not to personalize it.

## Fear of Failure Stops Forward Progress

The inaction that results when people are stuck in the fear cycle takes on many forms. Here are three most common ones.

1. **Paralysis:** For some people fear of failure brings about absolute paralysis. They stop trying to do anything that might lead to failure. “The worst danger we face is the danger of being paralyzed by doubts and fears.

This danger is brought on by those who abandon faith and sneer at hope. It is brought on by those who spread cynicism and distrust and try to bind us to the great chance to do good for all mankind. People whose fear paralyzes them give up any hope of moving forward.

2. **Procrastination:** Other people maintain the hope of progress but never get around to following through. Someone once called procrastination the fertilizer that makes difficulties grow. Victor Kiam stated it more strongly; he called it opportunities natural assassin.

Procrastination steals a person’s time, productivity, and potential. As, President John F. Kennedy said, “There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.” Procrastination is too high a price to pay for fear of failure.

3. **Purposelessness:** Tom Peters, coauthor of *In Search of Excellence*, emphasizes that there’s nothing more useless than someone who comes to the end of the day and congratulates themselves, saying, “Well, I made it through the day without screwing up.”

Yet that’s what many people who fear failure do. Rather than pursue worthy objectives, they avoid the pain of making mistakes. And in the midst of that transition, they lose sight of any sense of purpose that they might have once possessed.

As fear of failure and the resulting inactivity compound, a person in the fear cycle exhibits additional negative side effects:

- **Self-pity.** He feels sorry for himself. And as time goes on, he takes less responsibility for his inactivity and starts thinking of himself as a victim.
- **Excuses.** A person can call down many times, but he won't be a failure until he says that somebody pushed him. In fact, the person who makes a mistake, then offers an excuse for it, adds a second mistake to his first. A person can break out of the fear cycle only by taking personal responsibility for his inaction.
- **Misused energy.** Constant fear divides the mind and causes a person to lose focus. If he is going in too many directions at once, he doesn't get anywhere. It's comparable to stomping the gas pedal of a car that's in neutral.
- **Hopelessness.** If allowed to run their course, continual fear and inaction rob a person of hope. And poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow described the situation in this way: "The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun. The brightness of our life is gone."

#### 4. Change your response to failure by accepting responsibility.

The moment a question comes to your mind, see yourself mentally taking hold of it and disposing of it. In that moment is your choice made. Thus you learn to take the path to the right. Thus you learn to become the decider and not the vacillator. Thus you build character.

What starts people down the failure freeway is a common mistake, failure, or mess up. But people who stay on the failure freeway don't think that it's their fault. Many people on the failure freeway make mistakes but refuse to admit them. They see every obstacle or error as someone else's fault. As a result, they generally respond in one or more of the following ways:

1. Blow up.
2. Cover up.
3. Back up.

4. Give up.

Your most important ability is RESPONSIBILITY.