

OVERCOME YOUR
FEAR of FAILURE

FAIL



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The Three Parts Of Overcoming Failure

No one likes to fail, but everyone fails at some point in their lives. For many people, the fear of failure is paralyzing and stops them from overcoming obstacles and reaching their goals.

The fear of failure creates negative self-talk that keeps people from learning and growing.

Overcoming the fear of failure is a necessary step in achieving personal goals and being successful. Scientists, psychologists, and business leaders have studied the fear of failure and how people can overcome it.



Overcoming the fear of failure is divided into three areas:

1. Preparing for Fear of Failure
2. Confronting Fear of Failure
3. Recovering from Failure

How a person prepares for and confronts fear determines how well they can overcome it. Recovering from failure helps people overcome fear in future situations. Scientists have developed specific steps in each area to help people learn to overcome the fear of failure.

Preparing for Fear of Failure

A person must be prepared to face failure to overcome the fear of it. The right mindset minimizes the fear of failure and puts it into perspective. While the fear of failure is a part of achievement, overcoming the fear requires understanding what failure is and how to learn from it.

The steps to prepare for fear of failure are:

- Redefine Failure
- Find Benefits from Past Failures
- Understand Threats
- Create Approach, not Avoidance Goals

Redefining failure can change a person's perception and fear level. Industry leaders in Forbes business magazine suggest that redefining failure as learning opportunities helps overcome fear.



It would not be failure if a person learned something useful from experience, even if what they discovered was that they didn't have the right plan to succeed.

Psychologists suggest redefining failure as discrepancies, or simply times when outcomes didn't meet expectations. When failure is defined in less personal terms or as learning experiences, there is less to fear.

To redefine fear, a person should look to their past failures and consider the benefits they received during those times. Learning a better way, discovering a new path, and realizing a plan didn't work all provide benefits to overcome the fear of failure in the future.

When a person uses the information and experiences they gained from previous failures, they have less to fear because they already know what to avoid.

Humans perceive failure as a threat. Because failure stops people from reaching their goals, they see it as a threat to their desires. Scientists at the University of

California Berkley concluded that when people perceive a threat, their bodies prepare to fight it.

Physically, a person's breathing and heart rate increase and they go into "fight or flight" mode. Preparing to fight is negative stress on a person's body and mind and can cloud their judgment, increasing their fear. These scientists suggest that a person should view failure as a challenge, not a threat. By viewing failure as a challenge, a person can calmly and logically think through the problem and find a way to overcome it, decreasing their fear response.

To redefine a threat as a challenge, a person needs to visualize the obstacles they face. They need to determine if their fear is based on a real or imagined threat. People often fear failure because they think of the worst-case scenario, instead of focusing on positive ways to reach their goals and avoid failure. Facing a challenge holds less fear than facing a threat.

Once a person has redefined failure, the next step is to create goals that approach success, not avoid failure. Approach goals focus on positive outcomes: learning something new, achieving a level of success, or growing to fill a need.

Avoidance goals focus on negative consequences: not freezing up during a presentation, not missing a deadline, or not falling short of a quota. Approach goals provide positive reinforcement while avoidance goals create fear of failure.

Confronting Fear of Failure

When confronting the fear of failure, a person must accept fear as an emotion and move past it.

The steps to moving forward instead of letting fear stop a person include:

- Let the Fear of Failure Pass
- Change Goals as the Situation Develops
- Build Confidence

Fear is a human emotion. Everyone feels fear. Business leaders describe feeling the fear of failure when they started, but they acknowledged that fear and kept trying.

If a person's goals are powerful enough, they can confront their fear of failure with a strong plan. When the desire for success is greater than the fear of failure, definite goals help a person overcome the fear.

People are often paralyzed by fear of failure when their plan isn't working. They may start strong but begin to fear failure during a difficult process. Psychologists suggest changing the goals in these situations.

Redefining failure by adjusting the goals limits fear. When forces beyond a person's control block the path to success, a more limited goal can help a person to still achieve some success without fearing a complete failure.

During the process of carrying out a plan, a person also needs to build their confidence. Leaders at the Harvard Business Review suggest focusing on what a person learns along the way to build confidence for the next step in the process.

The fear of failure decreases when a person has confidence in their prior decisions and achievements. By reminding themselves of what they have already done, a person limits their fear of the next step.



Recovering from Failure

Even with the best intentions, any plan can lead to failure. Many successful people have failed multiple times. When a person does fail, they need to recover positively from the experience.

The steps to recovering from failure include:

- Treating Yourself Kindly
- Accepting Mistakes
- Learning from the Experience

People often berate themselves more harshly for failure than they would another person. Here again, the scientists at the University of California Berkley point out that treating yourself kindly after failure helps stop a person from fearing failure in the future.

If a person makes the repercussions of failure too hard on themselves, they may develop a negative self-image or negative self-talk that causes them to fear the next challenge.

A person also needs to accept their mistakes when they fail. Without admitting responsibility, they will repeat their mistakes over and over, limiting their success and developing a greater fear of failure each time they face a challenge. Recovering from failure includes preparing for the next challenge by accepting mistakes and correcting them.

If a person views failure as a learning experience, there is more to gain from failure and less to fear. Educators teach students that failure isn't the end of learning. Instead, failure is the beginning of success.

Recovering from failure involves learning from the experience, so a person is better prepared to succeed when facing another challenge. Fear of failure is often fear of an unknown outcome. Learning from failure removes that fear because a person knows what does lead to failure and can make another choice instead.

Final Thoughts

Scientists understand that overcoming the fear of failure is based on human emotion and perception.

Overcoming the fear of failure involves defining failure more positively and using skills and abilities to confront it. When a person does fail, they can improve their outlook and limit fear by using failure as a learning experience.

