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7 Ways to Overcome the Fear of Failure *by John Wesley*

The fear of failure is perhaps the strongest force holding people below their potential. In a world full of uncertainty, a delicate economy, and countless misfortunes that could happen to anyone, it's easy to see why most people are inclined to play it safe.

But playing it safe has risk as well. If you never dare to fail your success will have a low ceiling. Most people underestimate their merit and ability to recover from failure, leading them to pass up valuable opportunities. The ability to fail big and fail often has been a mark of the spectacularly successful throughout history.

The following strategies will help you put risk and reward in perspective so you can overcome the fear of failure.

1. Consider the cost of missed opportunities - The biggest risk that people fail to consider is the benefit they lose by avoiding high risk/high reward opportunities. In his guide to career planning, Netscape founder Marc Andresen compares a well managed career to a diversified portfolio. The ideal career contains a wide range of job opportunities (some risky, some safe) that combine to form a relatively safe career with a high potential for growth. Taking high risk opportunities is essential because they offer the greatest reward: The issue is that without taking risk, you can't exploit any opportunities. You can live a quiet and reasonably happy life, but you are unlikely to create something new, and you are unlikely to make your mark on the world.

2. Research the alternatives - The unknown is a major source of fear. When you don't know what you're dealing with, potential consequences seem far worse than they actually are. Take the power out fear by understanding it. Research all the potential outcomes (both good and bad) so you genuinely understand the risk of failure and benefits of success. Analysing these outcomes will help you see through the fear of failure and make a logical decision.

3. Put the worst-case scenario in perspective - One of the most powerful questions posed by Tim Ferriss in the 4-Hour Workweek is: If you chase your dreams and fall flat on your face, worst-case scenario, how long will it take you to recover? The answer is probably less than you expect. How hard would it really be to find another job? Chances are you could recover completely in a few months. Is the fear of a few rough months strong enough to keep you in a mediocre situation indefinitely?

4. Understand the benefits of failure - As Emerson said, life is a series of experiments, the more you make the better. Each failure is a trial in an experiment and an opportunity for growth. Even if a failure costs you financially, the educational benefits can far outweigh the loss. Working for a start-up instead of a big company is considered risky, but according Paul Graham, "Managers at big companies prefer to hire someone who'd tried to start a start-up and failed over someone who'd spent the same time working at a big company." Maybe that experience at a big company isn't as safe or as valuable as you think?

5. Make a contingency plan - Another way to overcome the fear of failure is to reduce the downside. Hedge your risk by creating a contingency plan. Even if your first option fails, you can maintain the status quo with a solid backup plan. Daring to fail doesn't mean you have to risk losing it all. If you manage risk intelligently, you can capture the benefits of high risk opportunities while leaving yourself a safety net.

6. Take action - The best way to reduce fear and build confidence is taking action. As soon as you do, you'll begin accumulating experience and knowledge. Everything is hardest the first time. It's like jumping off a cliff into a lake — after you do it once, you see that the water is safe and each time afterwards is easy. Start off with small steps and build up your confidence until the fear of failure is manageable.

7. Burn the boats - When ancient Greek armies travelled across the sea to do battle, the first thing they would do after landing was to burn the boats, leaving them stranded. With no way to make it home besides victory, the resolve of the soldiers was strengthened. When success and failure are the only options, you have no choice but to follow through.

If you have a goal, but are afraid to commit, force yourself into action by burning the boats. Register for an exam in advance if you want to go back to school. Set a deadline to move to a new city without signing a lease. Fear of failure disappears when you realize it can't save you.

Some of our resources from www.recoverOz.com.au which may help with issue include

Language of Letting Go Journal

Fear, shame, anger, self-doubt. Helping people "let go" of self-destructive thoughts, emotions, and behaviours has been the life work of acclaimed author Melody Beattie.

Anger, Depression and Indecision Healing What Hurts

This 6 CD series explains how anger is a process that keeps the individual enclosed in a cycle of frustrated recovery efforts and produces failure. It looks at how anger blocks recovery, the faces of anger, indecision, depression and anger and choosing to stay stuck. Also meditations to speed healing.