**<http://www.forbes.com/sites/keldjensen/2012/08/08/rock-bottom-how-great-leaders-triumph-over-failure/>**

[**http://www.personalgrowthcourses.net/video/life\_risk**](http://www.personalgrowthcourses.net/video/life_risk)

Failure

By ISC- City of 6 October SLO® Team

*“It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all - in which case, you fail by default.” - J.K. Rowling*

One of the most inevitable struggles a person will face in their lifetime is failure. To be able to stand up again, brush off the remnants of failure and move forward is to change your perception and definition of failure:

From: Failure: 1. lack of success; failing 2. Unsuccessful person or thing. 3. Non-performance

To: ***Failure: 1. the starting line 2. part of process. 3. on the path to success***

Failure is viewed today as something worthy of castigation and criticism. What people don’t realize, however, is that failure may be the only way to achieve a goal. Failure is the door that leads to humility of achievement: learning what not to do and what to avoid when trying again. Most important, they learn something about themselves

Whenever we think of people who have achieved a high level of success, we picture them at the top of their class surpassing all of the limits before them. What we don’t realize is that those people may have stumbled many times before encountering success but always always tried again. They didn’t let their setbacks dictate their course or who they are.

Some examples of people who overcame their initial setbacks to nevertheless make their impact on our world are:

* Bill Gates: first company went bankrupt
* Vincent Van Gogh: only sold one painting in his lifetime
* Stephen King: first novel rejected 30 times
* Steven Spielberg: rejected from University of South California (a film school) twice
* J.K. Rowling: Harry Potter manuscript was rejected by publishers 12 times; one of them being due to the fact that she was a female.

This is only a short list of some of the people we hold in high regard as successful, but actually failed multiple times. Successful people’s failures teach us that no matter what the obstacles are, a person can overcome any challenge they are faced with, if they are determined, persistent and dedicated

When you fail, it just labels what you did and not who you are. It is what you did that failed. It is not YOU who are a failure. It is important to differentiate between the action and the person.

A person’s greatest motivation is their dedication. Dedication is how willing you to stick with something to achieve it, the lengths you will go to accomplish it. There are an infinite number of opportunities in the world, and an infinite number of failures to match. But what goes past both of those odds, is dedication. People are faced with obstacles every day, but they are different for each person: getting out of bed, passing an exam, paying rent, finding sponsors or clients for a start-up business. They all need the person to be focused and willing to go the distance and also, ready for criticism or failure. According to the famous Japanese proverb, “Fall down seven times, stand up eight”

The Forbes article we used was chosen because the writer, Keld Jensen, had started a company and it went bankrupt. So we trust his interpretation of failure and overcoming it as someone who has been through it himself. The video was used because of how the examples were very, humane and we can relate to them. All the people they mentioned are seen as everyday heroes by both children and adults yet very rarely do we realize their hidden backstories. The situations, such as being called stupid or shy or unimaginative are issues we face daily and the fact that these people become as successful as they are is inspirational to everyone.

We all have faced failure in one form or another, whether we failed a math exam, got cut from the school’s football team, or were told by others that we would not amount to anything. We are not defined as failures for not achieving the goals, but by believing we are not worthy and giving in to the defeat. Failure is not falling down, but staying down. Whilst success is defined by how we get up. When faced with the threat of failure, our natural response is to feel ashamed or embarrassed, and stop trying. But instead we should pause, reflect on the mistakes, have the courage to admit them, and then find ways to get up and go on, remembering “that which does not kill us, only makes us stronger.”

“If I had to select one quality, one personal characteristic that I regard as being

most highly correlated with success, whatever the field, I would pick the trait of

persistence. Determination. The will to endure to the end, to get knocked down seventy times and get up off the floor saying, "Here comes number seventy-one!”

Richard M. Devos

**Reflection Activity:**

* Think of a time/situation in which you “failed” at something you set out to do. Go back and write down three different ways you could have gone about and achieved this goal.
* Set a big goal for yourself. Break it down into smaller milestones. Put a plan of action into place. If you do not achieve the first milestone, than you must realize it is ok, and then go back and reevaluate your actions.