

Learning Through Failure

Upper-intermediate (B2-C1)



WARM-UP

Part 1. Read the statements. Decide if you agree, disagree, or are not sure. Explain your choice.

Failure means you're not good enough.

Failure is a necessary part of improvement.

Some people are naturally talented – others aren't.

Trying and failing is better than not trying at all.

Part 2. Read the four quotes below. Choose one that resonates with you most and discuss the questions.

"Failure feels personal, but it isn't."

"Improvement matters more than success."

"Failure is feedback, not judgement."

"You learn more from trying badly than not trying at all."

Discuss:

- What idea about failure does this quote suggest?
- Which common belief does it challenge?

VOCABULARY

Part 1. Look at the expressions below, which appear in the video. Match each expression to its definition.

Fall short of a goal

Take a calculated risk

Sink into despair

Admit shortcomings

Gain experience

Pursue an idea

1. _____ accept weaknesses or mistakes
2. _____ try something despite possible failure
3. _____ feel deep disappointment or hopelessness
4. _____ not reach the standard you wanted
5. _____ develop skills through practice
6. _____ continue working on something you believe in

Part 2. Complete each sentence using one of the expressions.

1. When the project didn't work out, I realised it had _____.
2. After the criticism, he _____ and stopped working for a while.
3. To improve, you need to be honest and _____ instead of making excuses.
4. Even unsuccessful attempts help you _____ over time.
5. If something really matters to you, it's worth continuing to _____, even if others don't believe in it.
6. Starting something new often feels uncertain, but sometimes you have to _____ to make progress.

Part 3. Discuss the following, using the expressions from the previous exercise.

1. A time when something you tried **fell short of your goal**
2. A moment when you had to **take a calculated risk**
3. Something that helped you **gain experience**, even though it didn't succeed
4. A situation where you had to **admit shortcomings** to improve
5. **An idea** you would still **pursue**, even if you might fail
6. A time when you felt tempted to **sink into despair**, but chose to keep going instead

VIDEO ACTIVITY

Part 1. You're going to watch a video called "Learning from Failure." Before watching, discuss the following questions.

1. Why do people often link failure to self-worth?
2. Why can creative or personal projects feel harder to fail at?
3. What do you expect the speaker to say about failure in the video?

Part 2. Watch the first part of the video, up to where the speaker explains how writing a bad novel changed their view of failure (0:00-0:45).

Part 3. Discuss the following questions.

- What was the speaker's original goal?
- Why did they see the project as a failure?
- What changed their perspective?

Then predict:

What do you think the speaker will say about dealing with failure next?

Part 4. Watch the second part of the video (0:45 to the end).

Part 5. Match the experiences from the video with their outcomes.

1. Feeling ashamed after failing

2. Reflecting honestly on mistakes

3. Repeated practice and study

4. Trying again with a new project

- A. Gradual improvement**
- B. Avoidance and self-criticism**
- C. Better understanding of weaknesses**
- D. Increased confidence to continue**

SPEAKING

Part 1. Read the statements below and say if you agree or disagree. Explain your opinion using examples or experiences.

- Failure is only useful if you analyse it.
- Talent matters more than persistence.
- It's healthy to feel bad after failing — but not forever.
- Improvement matters more than success.

Useful phrases:

- *I can see the value in...*
- *I partly agree, but...*
- *I'm not fully convinced that...*

Part 2. For each pair, choose the sentence you agree with more.

A. Aim for excellence.

B. Aim for improvement.

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A. Avoid failure.

B. Accept failure as part of learning.

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A. Talent is the most important factor.

B. Practice and persistence matter more.

Part 3. Complete the sentences with your own ideas.

1. A time I learnt something valuable from failure was _____.

2. I tend to be hardest on myself when _____.

3. If failure felt less personal, I would _____.



REFLECTION

Discuss the following questions.

1. What idea from the lesson stayed with you most?
2. What belief about failure would you like to challenge?
3. How might you approach failure differently in the future?

