

# 5 Great Questions to Ask Yourself After a Failure

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Let's face it. We all fail.

As we go through life we have relationships that don't work out, jobs that just aren't right, exams that we flunk, initiatives that don't succeed. The more new things we try the more failures we are likely to have. In fact, the only way to avoid failure is to do nothing new.

The important thing is how we deal with failure. It can be part of a downward slide in which lack of confidence reinforces feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. But experiencing failure can be a learning experience and an opportunity for a fresh start. A good way to begin this process is by asking yourself some tough questions.

**1. What can I learn from this?** Take responsibility for what went wrong. OK, so it was not all your fault – but some of it was. Successful people don't make excuses or blame others. They take ownership of the issues. Be critical but constructive. Try to look at the experience objectively. Make a list of the key things that happened. Analyze the list step-by-step and look for the learning points.

**2. What could I have done differently?** What other options did you have? What choices did you make? How could you have handled it differently? With the benefit of hindsight, what different steps would you have taken?

**3. Do I need to acquire or improve some skills?** Did the problem reveal some lack of skill on your part? How could you learn or improve those skills?

Perhaps there are books or courses or people you could turn to. Make a self-development plan to acquire the skills and experiences you need.

**4. Who can I learn from?** Is there someone to whom you can turn to for advice? Did a boss, colleague or a friend see what happened? If they are constructive and supportive then ask them for some feedback and guidance. Most people do not ask for help because they believe it to be a sign of weakness rather than strength. It's not. It shows that you are ready to learn and change. Any good friend will be happy to help.

**5. What will I do next?** Now draw up an action plan. Will you try something similar or something different? Revisit your goals and objectives. This reversal has been a setback on your journey but think of it as a diversion rather than a halt. You can now reset your sights on your destination and plan a new course.

If you read the life stories of successful people – especially inventors, explorers, scientists or statesmen – you will find that their early careers are littered with failures. Walt Disney, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford are typical examples. Abraham Lincoln suffered many defeats in his career in politics including losing the nomination for vice president in 1856 and his second run at being a U.S. Senator in 1858. Two years later he was elected president.

The important point is to use your setbacks as learning experiences and make them stepping stones to future success. There are always positives you can take from every episode in your life. Asking yourself these five questions can help find them.