

Failing Forward.....Towards Success

I recently heard an interview with leadership expert, best selling author and speaker, John Maxwell, and was intrigued by the discussion on the topic of “*Failing Forward*”, a book that he had written several years back.

So why are some individuals able to fight off handicaps and hardships, only to fail forward, not backwards? Maxwell says “.....I know of only one factor that separates those who consistently shine from those who don't: The difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and response to failure.”

Let's take a look at four areas and “success strategies” outlined in his book to help us see failure in a positive light, deal with it and move towards success.

1. Redefining Failure and Success

How can we change our perspective about failure? We're taught to fear it and avoid it. Acknowledge that we all make mistakes and fail. Most high achievers don't see mistakes as the enemy, but an opportunity to learn. Anyone of us can defeat failure. It begins with perspective; acknowledging and viewing our failures as stepping stones to our goals or purpose, “the price we pay to achieve success” as opposed to avoiding it at all costs.

2. Do You Mind Changing Your Mind

We have to acknowledge and accept responsibility for our mistakes and failures. Maxwell contends that failure is an inside job. When different individuals are confronted with a similar adversity why is it that one succeeds and one fails? To win the mind game against adversity requires a positive attitude. The secret to creating optimism is learning “contentment”, not the laid back, “need more toys” version but contentment from positive action. *“Contentment comes from having a positive attitude. It means expecting the best in everything-not the worst; remaining upbeat-even when you get beat up; seeing solutions in every problem-not problems in every solution; believing in yourself-even when others believe you've failed; holding on to hope-even when others say it's hopeless...a positive attitude comes from within. Your circumstances and your contentment are unrelated.”* **We must add positive action to a positive attitude to fail forward.**

3. Embracing Failure as a Friend

There is a certain amount of adversity we just have to overcome to succeed. But Maxwell takes it one step further, “To achieve your dreams, you must embrace adversity and make failure a regular part of your life. If you're not failing you're probably not really moving forward.” Living through failure creates resilience, adaptability, opportunities and strength. **Don't take it personally, step back and look at the big picture, be open to risk-taking, find the positive benefits.**

4. Increasing Your Odds for Success

Maxwell spells out the top reasons why people fail, and here are some of the actions that we can take to achieve success and fail forward:

- Develop people skills; build solid relationships and Emotional Intelligence or EQ.
- Attitude is everything; with one shift in perspective, our circumstances can change dramatically. Recognize when circumstances need changing; where there is a disconnect with a job, career path, or relationship.
- Examine the level of commitment and focus. A lack in either area can turn simple mishaps into failures.
- Be flexible and open to change. If you resist it you deny success.
- Develop self discipline, take personal accountability; take action in spite of outer circumstances. Create an action plan, goals for next steps and a sense of purpose.
- Talent alone won't bring success. Don't settle; let's improve our gifts, and the weak areas that can hold us back.

By redefining failure and success, changing our mind, embracing failure and taking actions to increase the odds for success, we're better able to muster up the courage and determination to face adversity head on and fail forward towards success.

Gary Recchion, with Recchion and Associates, Inc., is a writer, coach and speaker with 20 years in global career development and outplacement coaching and training supporting both individual and corporate clients from Phoenix, Arizona. His book, ***The 10 Success Strategies to Finding the Right Work***, is integral to job search/career transition training and coaching programs, offered in the classroom, through one-on-one face-to-face, and virtual e-coaching, and soon webinar. His Career Development programs include ***Personal Career Leadership*** series, ***Five Principles of Career Success*** series, ***Understanding Emotional Intelligence*** and ***Hiring Great People***. For more information on his book, individual and executive coaching, and corporate training programs see www.recchionandassociates.com or e-mail Gary at gary@recchionandassociates.com