MINDSET & SUCCESS

Failing Forward

by John C. Maxwell

Everyone fails. The difference is what happens next - Maxwell's fifteen steps teach you to fail forward, not backward.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **The difference between achievers and average people is not talent. It is how they see failure, and what they do after it.**

Everyone fails. Failing backward means blaming others, repeating the same mistakes, and quitting. Failing forward means taking responsibility, learning from each mistake, and persevering.

02 **Learn a new definition of failure: a mistake is an event, not a verdict.**

Errors are a normal part of progress, not proof you cannot make it. If you have not failed at anything, you probably have not risked anything.

03 **Remove the 'you' from failure.**

Erma Bombeck put it this way: 'I'm not a failure. I failed at doing something.' Keep your identity out of the result and the result becomes fixable.

04 **Take action, and your fear shrinks.**

Fear grows while you wait to feel ready. Master fear instead of being mastered by it: move first, even scared, and confidence catches up.

05 **Accept responsibility for your failures.**

Your response is the one part of any failure you control. Blame and excuses keep you stuck; owning your share is what lets you change the outcome next time.

06 **Do not let a failure on the outside get inside you.**

No matter what happens to you, failure is an inside job. The same setback ruins one person and refines another - the internal response decides which.

07 **Say goodbye to yesterday.**

Yesterday ended last night. Comparison, rationalization, isolation, regret, and bitterness are the signs the past is holding you hostage - let it go and today's energy is yours again.

08 **Change yourself, and your world changes.**

Work the process: see yourself clearly, admit your flaws honestly, discover your strengths joyfully, and build on those strengths passionately.

09 **Get over yourself, and start giving yourself to others.**

Self-focus magnifies failure. Put others first, find out what they need, and meet it with excellence and generosity - serving people is how achievers bounce back.

10 **Find the benefit in every bad experience.**

Adversity pays if you collect: it creates resilience, develops maturity, pushes future performance, provides greater opportunities, prompts innovation, and motivates.

11 **If at first you do succeed, try something harder.**

Winning at easy targets means the target was too small. Risk failing at something bigger and you buy bigger growth.

12 **Work on the weakness that keeps weakening you.**

Maxwell's top reasons people fail are fixable flaws: poor people skills, a negative attitude, a bad fit, lack of focus, a weak commitment, unwillingness to change, a shortcut mindset, and relying on talent alone. Find yours and fix it.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Maxwell's opening claim is the book's thesis, word for word: the difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and response to failure. It is not family background, wealth, or opportunity. Everyone fails - the question is which direction. People who fail backward blame others, repeat the same mistakes, accept limits from past mistakes, and quit. People who fail forward take responsibility, learn from each mistake, take new risks, and persevere. Maxwell opens with Mary Kay Ash, who pushed through discrimination, bad advice, and her husband's sudden death to build a billion-dollar company - proof that forward momentum, not a failure-free record, is what achievers share.

The book builds that response through fifteen steps. First he rebuilds the definition: failure is an event, not an identity - remove the 'you' from failure. Achievers, he shows, run on seven abilities: they reject rejection, see failure as temporary, see each failure as an isolated incident, keep expectations realistic, focus on their strengths, vary their approaches, and bounce back. Then come the active steps: take action to reduce your fear, change your response to failure by accepting responsibility, and refuse to let a failure from outside get inside you, because no matter what happens to you, failure is an inside job.

The later steps deal with time and self. Say goodbye to yesterday, since comparison, regret, and bitterness only keep you hostage to the past. Change yourself, and your world changes. Get over

yourself and start giving yourself to others. Find the benefit in every bad experience - adversity creates resilience, develops maturity, and prompts innovation - and learn from a bad experience until you have made it a good one. If at first you do succeed, try something harder. And work on the weakness that weakens you: his top ten reasons people fail are poor people skills, a negative attitude, a bad fit, lack of focus, a weak commitment, an unwillingness to change, a shortcut mindset, relying on talent alone, poor information gathering, and an absence of goals.

The closing steps tie it together. Step fourteen: there is not much difference between failure and success - the little difference is persistence, fed by purpose, the elimination of excuses, incentives, and cultivated determination. Step fifteen is the rallying cry - get up, get over it, get going - backed by a plan for what to do after you get back up, built on the acronym FORWARD: Finalize your goal, Order your plans, Risk failing by taking action, Welcome mistakes, Advance based on your character, Reevaluate your progress continually, Develop new strategies to succeed. Milton Bradley, who turned a failed lithography business into a games and education company, is the closing proof that a plan beats mere persistence.

The promise is not that failure stops hurting. It is that failure stops stopping you. Treat each loss as a stepping stone instead of a stumbling block, and your worst experiences become raw material: information about what to fix, proof of what you can survive, and fuel for the next attempt.

DO THIS WEEK

This week, pick the failure that is still bothering you most. Write down what happened, your share of it, and the benefit or lesson hidden inside it. Then run the book's FORWARD plan on it: finalize the goal it belongs to, order your next steps, and take the first action within 48 hours - even if you take it scared.

By John C. Maxwell, first published 2000 (Thomas Nelson); full title: Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success. Read it if a recent failure has you stuck, scared, or ready to quit.