

MOVING FROM FAILURE TO GROWTH

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Failure! It's a word we dread so much that we would rather not attempt something than fail in it.

For the young and the vulnerable, failure brings with it a myriad of reactions – shame, embarrassment, low self-esteem, anxiety, and even depression. Conversely, anything that brings these emotions can also set off the feeling of being a failure – flunking an exam, getting low grades, losing out on a competition, not getting the preferred choice of subject, college, or job, facing rejection at work or in a relationship.

Things do go wrong from time to time, and it can feel devastating at the time, especially if you have put in a lot of effort and time.

How can you pick yourselves up and move on?

Fortunately, this is a skill that can be learned, with positive coping habits. Coping does not mean you should stop feeling all these difficult emotions. Instead, acknowledge and label each of your feelings. Accept them and allow yourself to experience these emotions, although they may be unpleasant.

Do not be unduly concerned about what others will think. If you are worried about hurting your parents or close family, talk to them openly. Do take responsibility, but only to the extent appropriate, for actions that were within your control. Despite the disappointment and distress, there is something to be gained from every such experience. Identify and value those lessons. Most importantly, separate the outcome and the person. This one incident does not define your life

or who you are. Labelling yourself as a failure due to one misstep or misfortune is flawed thinking.

Parents need to understand that it is at times like these that children need the support of their parents and family the most. Be there for them without judgement & harsh criticism.

Growth mindset

One way to overcome failures is by adopting a growth mindset. Coined by Carol Dweck, a growth mindset is "the understanding that abilities and understanding can be developed". On the other hand, a fixed mindset is one that assumes abilities and understanding are relatively fixed. Basically, we are what we believe we are.

Imagine, after a tough job interview, candidate A says to themselves, "I am not smart enough to

get this job". Contrast that with candidate B, who thinks, "It's ok if I fail; at least I learned how to appear for an interview." Where one sees challenges as the end of the road, the other sees it as an opportunity.

Some more examples of growth mindset are -

"It's not too late to learn."

"I am going to be patient."

"I believe in myself"

"I can learn to do anything I want."

"My results don't define me."

Fixed mindset self-talks often sound like:

"I don't need to learn anymore."

"I am going to give up if things get frustrating or hard."

"If I am not good at something, then I can't do it."

"That's just who I am. I can't change it."

"I won't fail if I don't try. So I won't attempt....."

How can one change their mindset from fixed to growth?

First step is to be aware and to be mindful of your self-talk. Once we begin to notice these patterns, you can work towards replacing these negative self-talk with positive statements and affirmations. An easy way is to add the word 'yet' when you feel you can't do something. "I can't dance, yet" or "I can't understand this complicated Math yet". Another way is to devote time for playful exploration. Learn to do something new just for the fun of it. Seek feedback from people you trust so that you are continually working to improve yourself. Be curious and ask questions.

The point is, whether we are children or adults, all of us are capable of change and growth. If

at the end of every day, if there is some aspect of the day that makes you feel that yes, you have become a better, more competent person today than yesterday, then that's growth. Just this tiny amount of incremental change, but on a daily basis, will propel you into being and achieving all that you desire to be.

Instead of striving for perfection, let's practice the Japanese concept of Wabi-Sabi – a conscious, happy embracing of imperfection where beauty and divinity is seen in imperfections.

I hope that this article sparks the joy of growth for each one of you.

Dr Baby Saamuel is the Vice-Chairman, Knowledge Oman and is Ex-Chairman, Indian Schools in Oman. You can contact him at mail@babysam.biz for queries or suggestions.