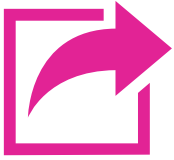




INTRA- and INTERPERSONAL

Reframing failure

Reframing failure



Strategies to share with students

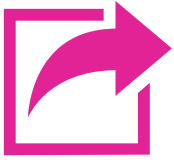
Suggested ideas and practices educators can share with students to support awareness of the topic and development of the skill. Strategies can be adopted/adapted as needed.

"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." ~Michael Jordan

- Reflect on your successes.** Sometimes we take our successes for granted. Think about your past successes, big or small. Did you experience any setbacks along the way? How did you overcome those instances of failure to achieve success? Can you identify ways in which those experiences changed how you approach tasks and projects today?
- Plan for failure.** Of course, you shouldn't plan to fail, but try to foresee when things may not go as planned and you may experience challenges along your path to achieving your goals. These may include acceptance into a specific program, obtaining a scholarship, maintaining a specific grade point average, or even obtaining your chosen job or role in an extracurricular activity. Work through these hypothetical scenarios to identify how you can use failure and what you can learn from failure to move forward.
- Keep failures in perspective.** Viewing every misstep, mistake or poor grade as a "failure" can lead to intense emotion and give the notion of failure too much power over us. Intentionally evaluate how much emotional weight should be attached to a given mistake and decide whether it even belongs on the failure spectrum.



Reframing failure



Strategies to share with students

Suggested ideas and practices educators can share with students to support awareness of the topic and development of the skill. Strategies can be adopted/adapted as needed.

- Reframe mistakes as opportunities.** When encountering mistakes and errors, deliberately replace the word “mistake” with “opportunity” and be explicit about the opportunities it can lead to. For example, if you are not placed in the specific role you wanted, and are instead placed in another role for a project or on a team, you may realize that this new role is one you resonate and excel more with. You also have the power to decide whether an average performance should be viewed as a mini-failure or a mini-success.
- Think of failures as guideposts.** These “failure guideposts” can point you to where you need to spend your time studying, for example. Research has shown that students tend to spend more time doing easy practice questions rather than hard practice questions that they are more likely to get wrong. If you increase your time on the harder practice questions, you’ll likely fail more often; however, these particular failures are guideposts that tell you which areas require more dedicated attention and study.
- Remember that failing does not make you a failure.** Differentiate behaviour statements such as “I have failed”, “I am failing” or “I might fail” from identity statements such as “I am a failure”. Be aware of your self-talk, and take care to not let your failures define who you are.



Reframing failure



Tips for course design and delivery

Ways educators can bring awareness of the topic and incorporate development of the skill into post-secondary course design and delivery.

- Identify failure and making mistakes in the process of learning.** When discussing learning objectives in your course, identify how failure in some parts of the course can contribute to learning objectives and increase performance on later course components. When students get wrong answers, instead of focusing on the wrong answer, focus on the thinking process that went into the answer. Shift to process-thinking instead of product-thinking.
- Discuss your own “failure” stories.** Think of your own stories around failure and consider if any of them would be suitable for sharing with students. These narratives and personal experiences can give students examples of failure being associated with success and better outcomes (e.g., becoming a professor), and demonstrate that well-managed failure can lead to motivation and a sense of purpose.
- Share discipline-specific “failure” stories.** Are there core examples of people in your discipline who learned from failure? (e.g., learning from bridge collapse analysis in engineering courses, learning from start-up business failures in management courses, learning from negative results in scientific experiments, learning from lack of sources in historical database searches).



Reframing failure



Tips for course design and delivery

Ways educators can bring awareness of the topic and incorporate development of the skill into post-secondary course design and delivery.

- Share course-specific “failure” stories.** Share stories of students from previous iterations of the course that faced challenges and managed to overcome them. Alternatively, share stories of students who could not overcome failure in your course, but still managed to succeed in the rest of their educational journey. With permission, or by ensuring anonymity, share where those students have ended up and how they managed to lead happy and successful lives despite their failure.



Reframing failure



Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Normalizing Failure

Overview

The class conducts a social media search of failure-related ideas across various platforms to find examples of people having failed and recovered. The use of hashtags emphasizes the reframing of failure as students will look up words like resilience and strong in addition to failure.

Review the [Educator Activity Guide](#) before getting started with this activity.

Time

- Under 20 minutes
- 20 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour
- Over several classes

Modality

- In person
- Online synchronous
- Online asynchronous

Format

- Individual
- In pairs
- Small groups
- Large groups
- Whole class

Resources

- Module notes
- Paper
- Pen/pencil
- Laptop/tablet
- Social media images



Reframing failure

Instructions

1. Introduce this activity as a reminder that failure leads to growth and discovering new ways to grow. Do this activity at a time in the term where you feel students could benefit from this reminder. You may also use it to introduce a relevant course topic where an initial failure led to a success.
2. Use the projector or share your screen so that everyone can look at the same visuals at the same time.
3. Generate some hashtags surrounding failure and search for these one at a time. Some examples could be #failure, #failurequotes, #fieldworkfail.
4. Choose some examples from these posts and use them to guide a discussion about failure being something positive. Allow students to identify how each post you look at is an instance of someone reframing failure
5. Ask students to each reflect on a personal takeaway from this activity. It might be a point made in the discussion, a quote, a visual, etc. The takeaway should be something that will help them to reframe failure in their own lives.

Variation(s)

- Have students create memes or gifs that highlight the benefits of reframing failure.



Reframing failure



Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Three Peer Feedback

Overview

In groups of three, students offer peer feedback and help peers to revise their original work. This activity reflects that failure can be used as a tool towards continuous development.

Review the [Educator Activity Guide](#) before getting started with this activity.

Time

- Under 20 minutes
- 20 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour
- Over several classes

Modality

- In person
- Online synchronous
- Online asynchronous

Format

- Individual
- In pairs
- Small groups
- Large groups
- Whole class

Resources

- Module notes
- Paper
- Pen/pencil
- Laptop/tablet
- Previous assignments and evaluation criteria



Reframing failure

Instructions

1. Identify an assignment that can be used for this activity. This activity will allow students to get feedback on their assignment before submitting it and will reframe failure for them.
2. Ask students to form groups of three and to ensure they have their assignment and criteria.
3. Have students each choose a letter for themselves (A, B, C).
4. Inform students that they will read each other's assignments and offer their peer three distinct pieces of feedback (e.g., something to change or revise). They can refer to the assignment criteria and select three criteria from there. Devote 15 to 20 minutes for this step.
5. Students should follow this system for giving feedback:
 - Person A reads/reviews the work of Person C
 - Person B reads/reviews the work of Person A
 - Person C reads/reviews the work of Person B
6. After writing their feedback, ask students to return assignments to their peers and read the feedback their peers left them. Here, students can discuss the feedback they left each other and answer any questions they have.
7. Tell students to repeat the process with the remaining member of their group, making sure not to provide feedback that was already given.
 - Person A reads/reviews the work of Person B.
 - Person B reads/reviews the work of Person C.
 - Person C reads/reviews the work of Person A.
8. After both rounds of feedback, tell students to compile all the suggestions they received/wrote to each other in one big list.
9. Return to the whole-class setting. Have students share the feedback they left each other. Write all/some of these responses. This part should take one or two minutes.
10. Use this list to frame mistakes/failure as common to others, necessary, and central to learning. Tell students that this list is indicative of growth, and that applying feedback is a way to use failure as something positive. When we respond to failure, we turn it into support.



Reframing failure

Instructions

11. Ask students to reflect individually on ways they can see the positives in 'failure'. Ask students to consider what another word for *failure* could be.

Variation(s)

- Students can continue to work in their small groups to apply their feedback and offer suggestions.



Reframing failure



Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Failure Hierarchy

Overview

Through use of the model A Spectrum of Reasons for Failure, students reflect on past mistakes/failures and find ways to reframe these episodes as positive learning experiences. This activity can follow a specific assignment or can stand on its own.

Review the [Educator Activity Guide](#) before getting started with this activity.

Time

- Under 20 minutes
- 20 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour
- Over several classes

Modality

- In person
- Online synchronous
- Online asynchronous

Format

- Individual
- In pairs
- Small groups
- Large groups
- Whole class

Resources

- Module notes
- Paper
- Pen/pencil
- Laptop/tablet
- Failure continuum (Spectrum of Reasons for Failure)



Reframing failure

Instructions

- Provide students with the failure continuum (*Spectrum of Reasons for Failure*) and the following definitions:
 - **Poor behaviour:** (also *Deviance*) An individual chooses to violate a prescribed process or practice.
 - **Inattention:** An individual inadvertently deviates from specifications.
 - **Inexperience:** (also *Lack of Ability*) An individual doesn't have the skills, conditions, or training to execute a job.
 - **Process Inadequacy:** A competent individual adheres to a prescribed but faulty or incomplete process.
 - **Task Challenge:** An individual faces a task too difficult to be executed reliably every time.
 - **Process Complexity:** A process composed of many elements breaks down when it encounters novel interactions.
 - **Uncertainty:** A lack of clarity about future events causes people to take seemingly reasonable actions that produce undesired results.
 - **Hypothesis Testing:** An experiment conducted to prove that an idea or a design will succeed fail.
 - **Exploratory Testing:** An experiment conducted to expand knowledge and investigate a possibility leads to an undesired result.
- Discuss the failure continuum.
 - The continuum lists different reasons that could cause something to fail. In general, reasons closer to the left side of the continuum are *blameworthy* (or predictable reasons that could have been avoided) and the reasons closer to the right side of the continuum are *praiseworthy* (unpredictable and desired).
 - The praiseworthy reasons for failing happen when people are working (e.g., testing a hypothesis): these types of failure usually lead to innovation and growth and should be celebrated.
 - The blameworthy reasons for failing happen when people are not working (e.g., decision to violate a behaviour, lack of experience).
- In a whole-class setting, go through all the reasons, one at a time, and use their definitions to elaborate on their meanings (e.g., inattention is a lack of focus). Offer examples. (e.g., Inattention could happen when someone is engaging in other work at the same time as working on something they should be working on).



Reframing failure

Instructions

4. Ask students to independently identify experiences of failure for these reasons (e.g., not doing as well on an assignment because you were inattentive to all the expectations).
5. At the end of the activity, ask students to reflect on the value of failing and why we should anticipate failure. Remind them that failures that happen when we are going about our work are necessary and important to our learning. You can present them with this case and have them use it as a basis for their reflection
 - *You try to use more sophisticated words in your essay to develop your writing, but the essay becomes incoherent and hard to understand. How is this failure to write clearly a good thing?*
 - Students comment on how they will write with fewer and clearer words going forward, thereby making this failure a success.
6. Ask students to think of times they have failed. Through honest reflection, have them decide where their reason for failure falls on the continuum.

Variation(s)

- Think of failures from your course or discipline and, together with students, discuss and identify where they fall on the continuum.

