

# Guiding Children Through Failure and Disappointment



## Counsellor's Newsletter

*Our greatest  
glory is not in  
never falling  
but in rising  
every time we  
fall*

~ Confucius

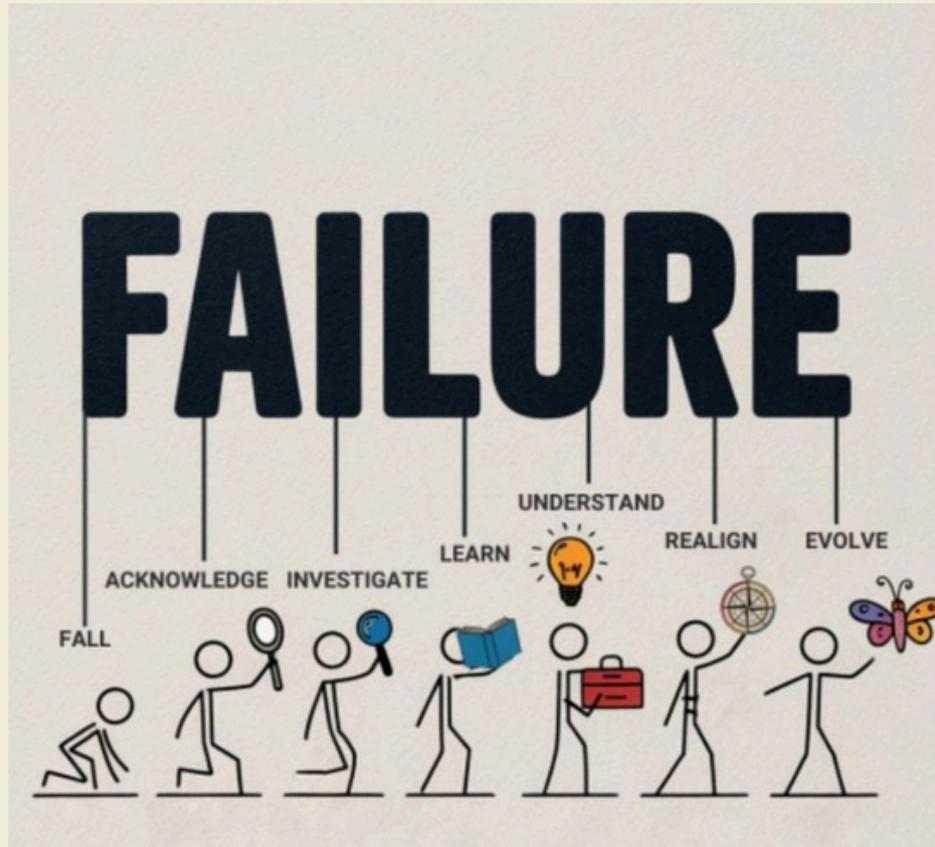
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The quote above suggests that success is less about never experiencing failure and more about how we respond to it. Failure isn't the end—it's an essential step in any learning process. It forces us to pause, reflect, and identify what went wrong and explore fresh strategies for success. This process of trial, feedback, and refinement is where real growth happens.

In a world that often celebrates success and achievement, children can feel immense pressure to always get things right. But failure and disappointment are inevitable parts of life and are essential for growth. As parents, caregivers, or educators, how we guide children through these moments shapes their resilience, self-esteem, and future mindset. Embracing failure along with success, allows children to develop resilience, confidence, and a growth-oriented mindset.

# What is the Meaning of Failure?

Failure is the experience of not achieving a desired goal, outcome, or expectation. It can happen in many areas of life—school, sports, work, relationships, or personal goals. But failure doesn't just mean "losing" or "being wrong." It means trying something that didn't work out the way you hoped. Many great inventors, athletes, and leaders failed many times before they succeeded. Thomas Edison failed thousands of times before inventing a working light bulb. He said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."



## How do children view failure?

Many students hesitate to try new things because of fear of failure, and this hesitation stems from several factors. Failure isn't seen as a learning moment but as confirmation of a lack of ability. Consequently, they avoid challenges entirely. A culture that rewards only success can make students see mistakes as shameful. A fourth grader once said she avoided answering a question simply because she might be wrong. Many attribute this to societal shame around failure. Another factor is unrealistic internal demands and perfectionism that contribute to fear of failing. pressures make students reluctant to even attempt new tasks.

YOU  
DON'T  
NEED TO BE  
AN EXPERT  
TO DO  
SOMETHING  
GREAT

# Accepting and embracing failure:

Not learning to tolerate failure leaves kids vulnerable to anxiety. It leads to meltdowns when the inevitable failure does occur, whether it happens in school or at home. And perhaps even more important, it can make kids give up trying or trying new things.

Allowing children to face age-appropriate failures—or “desirable difficulties”—builds confidence, autonomy, and problem-solving skills. Renowned educators like Jessica Lahey argue that overprotecting children can lead to learned helplessness and anxiety. There's a growing realization among teachers and other professionals who work with children that kids increasingly need help learning how to fail.

Unfortunately, as the world puts increased pressure on kids to be winners, and parents feel compelled to enable them in every way possible, we're seeing more and more kids who become overwhelmed over even the smallest misstep. It can be very tough to watch your child fall down but they can only learn how to handle disappointment through trial and error.



i ~~failed~~  
learned

No one is perfect. That's the first lesson that we need to teach our children. The second is that our mistakes are just part of life. Children must understand that if we do not let the failures defeat us, then there is no need to worry about them, rather they can be used as a part of the journey. This is a primary reason why it's important to practice goal-setting as a family and with your children. This models for our kids that all paths to the goal are never a simple straight line but there is one stepping stone after another to reach achievement. Accomplishing goals takes effort, adaptation, problem-solving skills, and a positive frame of mind – all of which require embracing failure as a gift instead of feeling set back by it.

## Overcoming Failure

As children grow up, they seem to be hard-wired to focus on the negative aspects of their lives; however, we can teach them how to be resilient and see the good in every situation. It trains their mindset in the situations but also helps them overcome failure by helping them think through, step-by-step what happened. We want our children to see success as something we all go through and a process and not something instant. Even finding success the first time they try usually requires work. And we want to focus on the work put in versus the output – this is what creates resilience and models for our kids that mistakes are ok and to stumble along the way is normal. They will learn the importance of failure and how it leads them to success in life by making mistakes and not giving up no matter what happens. This way, our children will be ready for any challenge that comes their way.



# A few tips that can help children while understanding how to overcome their failures

- Making children acknowledge that failure is a natural part of the growth process.
- Helping them realise that failure can be a learning opportunity.
- Helping them break down goals into smaller, manageable steps to reduce overwhelm.
- Surrounding them with supportive and encouraging individuals.
- Helping them set realistic expectations to avoid feeling overwhelmed by pressure.
- Encouraging children to focus on the process rather than fixating on the final outcome.
- Rewarding them for facing fears and taking risks.
- Using positive talks to help them replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations.

## Overcoming Fear: Do This, Not That

DO THIS	NOT THAT
✓ Befriend your Fear	Avoid your Fears
✓ Think About What You Could Miss Out On	Focus on Why You Shouldn't Do It
✓ Focus on Your Journey	Compare Yourself to Others
✓ Get Support	Do It Alone
✓ Take Small Steps	Try to Do It All At Once
⚠ Reflect On Your Progress	Hurry from One Thing to the Next
⚠ Celebrate Your Wins	Shame Yourself for Not Moving Quick Enough



At DYPIS, we believe that failure and disappointment are a natural part of learning and growing. Our goal is not to protect students from struggle, but to help them learn how to deal with it in a healthy and positive way. We teach children that mistakes are not something to be afraid of—they are a chance to learn and do better next time. We encourage learners to take risks and try new things, even if they might fail. We give praise for effort, not just for results.

With the help of posters and classroom displays we remind learners that failure is okay and that they can always keep trying. We use examples of real people—like scientists, athletes, and inventors—who failed many times before they succeeded. These stories help them understand that everyone faces failure, and it's how we respond that matters. Our Inclusion team also plays a key role in supporting this mindset. In their wellness classes, students explore essential topics such as, Managing disappointment, Building resilience, Handling peer comparison and self-doubt etc.

We are also planning some fun and meaningful activities to help students talk about and learn from failure like.

- Failure Friday – A time when students and teachers share a moment when they failed and what they learned from it.
- Growth Gallery – A display that shows student work before and after, to show how much they have improved. It celebrates progress, not perfection.

Through these lessons and activities, we are helping our children become brave, confident, and ready to face life's challenges with a positive mindset.



# Bill Gates

dropped out of Harvard and never got a college degree. He also failed at his first business. Today, the Microsoft co-founder is a billionaire and one of the richest people in the world.



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## Supportive Language: What to Say

Here are seven phrases that can be used to nurture resilience and growth in children:

- “Failure is part of the journey, not the end.” – Helps children reframe setbacks as stepping stones.
- “It’s okay not to be the best.” – Shifts focus from comparison to personal improvement.
- “Let’s talk about what you’ve learned.” – Encourages reflection and learning rather than self-criticism.

- “Even Thomas Edison made mistakes.” – Normalizes failure using a familiar success story.
- “You are not your failures.” – Separates a child's identity from mistakes, protecting self-esteem.
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- “Celebrate the effort, not just the outcome.” – Reinforces the value of process over results.

In guiding children through setbacks, remember that our role is not to shield them from disappointment but to stand beside them as they learn and grow.

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