Strategies For Overcoming A Sense Of Failure

At one point or another in a person’s life, some form of disappointment, rejection or failure is bound to be experienced. Many types of events can induce us to feel a sense of failure. Some examples are: doing poorly on a test, going through a break-up with a partner, not making an important sale, or having difficulty obtaining a job. All of these experiences are disheartening and may negatively affect our motivation and self-esteem.

Failure may be interpreted as a loss in a person’s sense of self. This is especially true when a person is terminated from a long standing job or going through a divorce. A person experiencing failure may undergo a process similar to that of grieving a death. Some reactions may include: shock, fear, anger, shame or despair.

One way of coping with failure is to develop a different perspective on it. “Failure” can be viewed as a judgment about an event, as a temporary situation, and not a reflection of a flaw in a person’s character. It’s important to remember that it is the way you cope with a setback that helps to define you, not the setback itself.

Experiences of failure, and the strategies for recovering from it, are as varied as the individuals themselves. There are however, some commonalities that can be used as guidelines for a person to rebound from failure. The first step is for a person to simply recognize his or her feelings and accept them as valid. Perhaps the failure was their fault, or maybe it was due to circumstances beyond their control. Whatever the reason, they may feel depressed, and getting caught up in the “blame game” will not be helpful. If a person believes that they did the best they could with the information they had available at the time, then they can get past “beating themselves up” over the failure.

It may be necessary for a person to allow himself or herself to just have a bad day, to feel bad, stay in his or her pajamas, read or watch television, and let the world take care of itself without him or her. While this may seem like wallowing in self-pity, if done only for a day, or a few hours, it can also be seen as a way of taking care of oneself. If people give themselves time to heal, then they can get on with the constructive task of preparing for future success.

The next step is to figure out what may have gone wrong, and how to remedy it. This may take some honest (if uncomfortable) soul searching, and also listening to feedback from others. A person may try to reinterpret or re-label what happened, not so much to avoid reality as to see the event in a different light. These times of crisis can enable a person to rethink their values and make positive, lasting changes in his or her behavior.

Lastly, in order to triumph over failure a person needs to take action. Feeling helpless and hopeless will not help someone to grow and move forward. Breaking down overwhelming tasks into manageable units is a good idea, to get a feeling of accomplishment and to establish a pattern of success.

Remember that in every setback there is a unique opportunity for personal growth. If you learn something new from your experience, then it may not be a failure at all. People can and do come out of the experience feeling stronger and wiser, with a renewed sense of purpose and hope.

Reference: