

Why Your Failures Are Your Most Valuable Currency



Image Credit: Tiny Buddha

By Sam Boomer | [Tiny Buddha](#)

“The master has failed more time than the apprentice has even attempted.” ~Proverb

There’s no prize for coming last. But that doesn’t mean it holds no value at all.

We’re so obsessed with not measuring up to expectations that we can deny ourselves the permission to take chances. So many of us are risk averse. Paralyzed by the fear of failure. It robs us of our creativity and moments of spontaneity that are often the source of our greatest triumphs.

And although some may view failure as the end of the road, it’s far from being an absolute.

You're meant to fail!

The key difference between those who allow their experiences to define them and those who view it as a challenge is attitude. You have a choice. What direction are your missteps going to take you? The only way is forward. "You fail your way to success."

Letting Go of Everything You Ever Dreamed About...

When I was young, I was never the best at anything. I worked hard, and I always managed to reach the next milestone that was placed in front of me. But that's about it.

However, I did have a talent for music that surfaced in my early teens. Again, I was never the best or most technical player. But I *was* creative, and I pursued it relentlessly. Like many others before and after me, I thought I was going to set the world on fire with a guitar in hand, wearing my heart of my sleeve.

It didn't work out. Not even close...

My idea of success was all about me. It was an ego-centric vision. And through a combination of unfortunate injuries and just plain running out of career options in my mid-twenties, I admitted defeat. At the time, it crushed me... I'd invested more than ten years into learning multiple instruments, and to lean on the old cliché—it was my entire world.

But I *had* to make a change.

It was the first time in my life I'd ever had to step away from something and say, "Okay, this isn't working. What else is there for me?"

Looking back now, in many ways, it was a very grounding experience. I was perhaps guilty of being a little too

cocksure and overly ambitious. I can see how it was necessary, that it was a failure which came as an intervention of sorts, allowing me to steer my life in a new direction – one that would ultimately hold far more meaning...

At twenty-six, I decided to reskill myself. So I went back into full-time education to study creative writing. I'm a self-confessed right-brainer. And if one creative avenue was now closed to me, I was at least going to make sure I could still lead an interesting life.

“Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing.” ~Denis Waitley

Now, instead of the egocentricity of being a musician, I wanted to be a fantasy novelist!

Different setting, same mindset.

But all that changed during my third and final year of university. As part of a work-based module, I had to create and deliver a writing-based project that would benefit the local community. At the time, homelessness was becoming an increasing issue, so I chose to offer poetry writing workshops at a local YMCA shelter.

And that's where the switch flipped for me. It was a paradigm-shifting experience.

Up until that point, I had a fixed idea of what my [success](#) would—and should—look like. It was about me and *my* attainment. It had never really included what I could do for others. But over the course of six weeks working with a disadvantaged social group that changed very quickly.

Poetry is a hard sell, even to a many writers. But here I was trying to get people engaged who were the furthest thing from

an ideal audience. Many of those who attended suffered from mental health issues. They weren't always *that* interested and sometimes didn't show up at all

But they did respect me and gave the exercises their best effort. They didn't always 'get it.' But they were willing, and I was grateful. Around half the attendees were illiterate/dyslexic, and as far as they were concerned, I was exposing their flaws. Except I wasn't. I was trying to empower them. And slowly, this came off as the weeks progressed.

There were more than a few 'aha moments' in those workshops. But my biggest success was taking a young guy in his mid-twenties, who we'll call Mike, from a place of zero confidence to complete elation at creating his own original piece, despite suffering from severe dyslexia.

I don't have the superlatives to describe the moment other than to phrase it like this...

When Mike read his poem out loud, you could see him grasping something that wasn't there before. You could see a change in his demeanor. He'd let go of his self-imposed limits. He 'got it,' and I got it, too. I could see the value of giving belief back to those who'd long-since written themselves out of the game.

It was a transformative experience for me and a real watershed moment.

I got a huge kick from having such an impact on someone's well-being. I was completely enthused by a passion to help facilitate positive change.

"You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." ~John Bunyan

By that point, I was close to graduation, and let's just say you don't look for openings as a novelist in the classified

columns. But here was something that I could do now. I *could* make a difference in people's lives, whether through writing or some other means. I resolved that I would become a support worker and be of service in whatever way I could.

My vision of success was no longer about me. It was no longer about financial gain, status, or any other material trappings. The 'thing' I now sought was more intangible but was so much more valuable from a spiritual perspective.

From this vantage point, not making it as a musician didn't feel like such wasted potential, anymore. That chapter of my life now appeared more akin to a stepping stone. I'd simply been redirected by synchronicity. It was confirmation and affirmation that as one door closes, another one is always opening.

No longer did I fear failure, because here was a path that could only have been taken if there was room freed up in my life to do so. [Sometimes, you need to let go in order to move on.](#) And here was a prime example of that.

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