

# Is Failure an Illusion?

Failure is defined as not achieving a goal. So what we need to realize is that our definition may be inadequate. If we replace the word *goal* with *achievement* and we ask did we *achieve* anything, the answer is very different. All events in life help us to clarify what it is that we want and what it is that we don't want. When we set "goals" we are setting up guidelines for what we want in our lives. We state our destination and we have a time frame in which we want to reach that destination.

- I want to increase my sales
- I want the promotion that's up for grabs
- I want to increase the company's profit margin
- I want more money
- I want a great relationship

Take the first one for example, "I want to increase my sales", if you have put a time frame on that and you don't increase your sales in that time frame you may say you failed. However, if you look at "did you achieve anything in that month?" the answer is always yes. The very least you achieved is that you can identify why you didn't achieve more sales and that is a big step toward achieving your initial goal. You will know more about yourself and therefore have more to work with when next you endeavor to "increase your sales".

How about the last one, "I want a great relationship". When you have had your heart broken and feeling sorry for yourself that it "didn't work out", that's when you get a lot of clarity as to what it is that constitutes a "great relationship". With every relationship you get clearer and clearer as to what you want from a relationship. This has to be considered a great success.

Reaching our goals is made up of a lot of stepping stones and most of the time we aren't conscious of how many stones we have to step on to reach our desired destination. As long as we keep putting one foot in front of the other just the way life calls us to do, we are on our way to reaching our desired goals. When we take a moment to stop and ask ourselves "if we didn't achieve what we wanted to achieve, what *did* we achieve along the way?" That is when we can often get our greatest insights and our greatest "failures" can become our greatest "triumphs".

I like the way Albert Schweitzer put it - "Success isn't the key to happiness, happiness is the key to success".

There's one thing to be noted here that is extremely important and I feel is often overlooked and not understood. When we didn't achieve our goal, almost all of us look at what we did wrong and how we can change it. That's looking at our weaknesses instead of our strengths that is the opposite of what is most helpful. We study successful people to become successful so we need to study what we did right in all situations and try and do more of that rather than focusing on what we did wrong. When we can find the positive aspects of our actions we can turn perceived failure into success.

Ask yourself, "what did I do that really worked for me?" "What did I do in that journey toward my goal that I loved doing that came easily to me that excited and enlivened

me?" That's what I mean by strengths. Weaknesses will be things that drain and frustrate you. There will be things that you hate to do and you avoid doing. When next you set a goal, do more of what *strengthens* you and less of what *weakness* you and it is my guess that your outcomes will be more of what you want. If not a bit more refining may be necessary but at least you will have enjoyed the journey more and that is such a great success in its self.

Have fun with your failures

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