

# A WEEK IN *Learning*

## How Do You Define Failure?

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*“Every failure is a step to success.”*

- William Whewell

I want you to think about the definition of failure. I am not referring to the recipe you tried over the weekend that was a complete disaster, or the new, disappointing restaurant down the street. I am talking about your personal definition of failure, and any action that follows it. Have you ever felt like you failed in school, a relationship, or at a job? From that, did it result in being discouraged to try again? Some of us look at failure as a one-time attempt. *If I fail at something, then that’s it – I can’t, and won’t, do that again.* If that sounds familiar, then I challenge you to get a new definition of failure.

Consider Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. If you think they have never failed at something – you’re wrong. Edison had more than a few ventures that turned out to be either too expensive for consumers or too far ahead of their time. To name a couple: the electrographic vote recorder and the electronic pen. From that, he learned to steer towards what consumers actually *want* and *need*. One of his most successful inventions, as we may all be aware of, is the lightbulb. However, that success came with a lot of failed attempts (1,000 to be exact). Henry Ford also had his fair share of failures. Ford was unsuccessful at producing a car with his first set of investors, spending all of the money with no results. Even after producing a car, Ford’s Detroit company went bankrupt.

So, what sets them apart? What made them eventually succeed? It was their outlook on their ‘unsuccessful’ situations. They shifted their way of thinking and realized that their failures were actually opportunities to grow. This relates to a well-known concept called failing forward, in which a failure is looked at as trial and error attempt that opens up opportunities. Just because we were not successful at a venture, a profession, or any attempt at doing something new, does **not** mean we are limited in our successes. We are human, we will fail, but we should fail forward. Below you will find some Rules for Being Human, inspired by Ancient Sanskrit, to help you redefine failure:



***“While you may stumble along the way, I encourage you to get back up, learn, grow and keep going.”***

- Gwen Ahlbrecht

## How Do You Define Failure?

**There are no mistakes – only lessons.** Failures, or mistakes, should be looked at as part of the process towards success. We should be altering our thoughts around what failure actually is: a lesson/opportunity.

**A lesson is repeated until it is learned:** Until we learn from a failure, we will continue to do what we have always done. In doing so, we will always get what we have always had – nothing. We must look for the lesson within each failure to learn, grow and move on.

**You'll know you've learned a lesson when your actions change:** This is the essence of learning. When our actions, attitudes, and behaviors change - we have learned.

If Thomas Edison and Henry Ford had not learned from their failures, we would be living in the dark, riding horses. In every aspect of our personal and professional lives, there are lessons to be learned. While you may stumble along the way, I encourage you to get back up, learn, grow and keep going. Know that your success comes from failing forward.

*"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."*

- Thomas Edison

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