



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #231

Steven Hayes

Dr. Steven C. Hayes is a professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Nevada. An author of 45 books and over 600 scientific articles, he is the originator and pioneering researcher in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy or "ACT," a popular evidence-based form of psychotherapy that uses mindfulness, acceptance, and values-based methods. His research has been cited by the NY Times, Men's Health, The Wall Street Journal, The Oprah Magazine, and many other media outlets.

His popular book *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life* was featured in Time Magazine and at one time was the best-selling self-help book in the United States. His new book is titled *A Liberated Mind: How to Pivot Toward What Matters*.

Dr. Hayes has been president of several scientific societies and has received multiple national awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. Google Scholar ranks him as among the world's most cited scholars, living or dead, in any area of study.

Quotes

"We've got to figure out how to put the problem-solving mind on a leash. Use it when it's really helpful, reign it in, and use another mode of mind when it's not helpful."

"We treat life like a problem to be solved rather than a process to be lived."

"Your past history includes things like failure which can be a powerful ally."

"This psychological flexibility can be learned." - Jim Harshaw

About The Comparative Mind 12:48 - 14:17

"Once you're in a problem-solving mode, what you do is compare what's going on right now to some sort of verbally imagined future that you think is ideal. There's a piece in there that's wonderful, like what are your values and where are you going. But when you make that comparison, guess what? You're always on the short-end of the stick. No matter how much money you've made, you can make more. That comparative mode of mind means you're not good enough. There's a piece in there that can be helpful, which is motivation. But that's just negative motivation instead of the positive motivation that really uplifts people. If you saw a sunset tonight, you would say, 'Wow, look at that.' You're not going to say, 'The pink one yesterday was better. The cloud is wrong.' But when you look at your life, you do that. We need this kind of 'wow' mode of mind to appreciate our kids, to hug our spouse, to have peace of mind. We haven't learned how to do that. Where did we learn that? Most of us used to learn that inside our wisdom traditions, our religious traditions, our spiritual traditions, all of which are weakening. The dogmatic side of them are still there but not that mystical side. We're trying to put it in now."

About Acceptance And Commitment Therapy/Training 19:27 - 23:15

"The Genesis personally came out of my own panic disorder and watching me as a young academic almost 40 years ago, spinning down to a point where I couldn't give a lecture to undergraduates. I couldn't make sounds come out of my mouth. I was terrified of them. In a three-year period, it got me down to a point where I was going to lose everything. On a dramatic night [inaudible 19:50] I think I'm having a heart attack and I realized I was having a panic attack. In that hitting bottom, I realized there's a voice inside my head, telling me to run, fight, and to hide. I had a sort of out-of-body experience. I could hear the voice. We all carry it with us. Four-year-olds understand Goofy with horns on one shoulder and a Goofy with halo on the other shoulder. So we get there are voices in our head, and that dictator's voice, telling you, 'You have to have a better car than the person next door,' or whatever. I caught that dictator voice telling me to run, fight, and hide from my experience. Let's say you go into a relationship setting and you've got a sixth sense that this person is not good for you. How would you know that? Because you've interacted with somebody like that in the past and it was a train-wreck. Well, the mind will kind of tell you to not even notice your own feelings because bad ones are bad and we only want good ones. How do we produce only good ones? When you've had failure experiences, betrayal, abuse, you've had things happen, you want to learn from that. How are you going to feel it? You're going to feel it in that sixth sense. I had played out this run away, hide, and fight to the point I couldn't function at all. When I realized it was the dictator within, telling me to do that, I basically said,

'F you, I'm not going to do it anymore. I am not going to run from me. If I'm feeling bad, I'm going to take my time to feel bad.' And then I realized bad is an evaluation. What is the actual feeling, how to pull at its joints, see what's going on, orient to where I am, step forward. I quickly learned in the few years that values can't be done if you don't have that posture, because when you really care, you're right on the edge of places you know how to hurt. If you want a relationship, it hurts when it falls apart. It's a package. If you really love your kids, you're worried about bad things that might happen to them and you want to protect them from that. So you can't really care and pursue anything if you're not open to failure. You have to be open to the pain part in order to have the joyful journey part. That's not logical, but it's psychological. That's how we're arranged, because we're historical creatures. Our past pains form how we best can move forward and our aspirations raise issues at how painful it would be to not succeed at that. You have that kind of paradox. When I saw that, I started bringing it into people's lives in therapy and boom, things are opening up just like they did with me."

About Reigning In the 'Dictator' Voice 28:00 - 29:49

"Instead of saying 'I'm a failure,' say, 'I'm having a thought that I'm a failure.' When you put people in imaging, your brain lights up completely different when you say, 'I'm bad,' versus, 'I'm having a thought I'm bad.' Are you having a thought? Yes. Is it an evaluation? Yes. Well, just tag it. Learn to name it. 'I'm having this feeling. I'm having this sensation. I'm having this memory.' Do it inside your head. When you note something, note what the category is. What does that do? It takes something that is psychological right up to your face and moves it out a couple of inches so that you can see it, but not just look from it. The mind does damage where it tricks you to putting it on like colored glasses. And then, everything you look at is colored by it. But you don't realize you're looking through glasses. If you can just take out the glasses enough, you can see the part that's colored and the part that isn't colored. 'I'm having a thought that I'm a failure. Cool. Is that useful to me? Might be. If it isn't, well, thank you for that but I got some other things to do now.' You don't have to convince the spider in your head to stop weaving that web. Some of the stuff you say to yourself, you came by it honestly. You had your parents tell you stuff. You had things happen. That's going to be in your head forever, but it doesn't have to be what your life is about. So when you notice it, tag it. That's just one of 200 methods for creating a tiny, little gap between the conscious human being and the thoughts that you're having."

About Gaining Confidence 36:05 - 36:58

If you fight for the feeling of confidence, that's the least confident thing anyone can do. It's the least amount of self-fidelity and self-faith. Don't be fighting for a feeling of confidence. Do the actual behavior of confidence and you will soon enough get the feeling of confidence. The behaviour is have faith in yourself, that your whole person can have a history that includes things that are painful and thoughts that are difficult. But if you come into the present moment with your full consciousness and your ability to focus on what you care about, you can build a life worth living. It doesn't matter if you're an Olympic athlete or a Fortune 100 CEO, or a person dealing with anxiety or depression, it's the same deal. Same hack."

About Leadership 38:48 - 40:28

"Taking the time to know the internal lives of the people around you, being able to show vulnerability, being able to show that you have emotions and you are interested in other people's emotions, find out what their values are, not just say what the company's values are. What are your values? Get into a conversation where you can have the team come together about values and vulnerabilities. Those are the kind of things that are in our leadership training, that I think at its best. Taking the perspective of others, for example. If I'm going to meet with anybody, especially if the meeting is challenging for me, if I have time, I've got to do a two or three-minute thought of imagining I'm this person coming to meet me. I go behind their eyes and get a sense of what are their emotions, their wants, their desires, what they bring into this moment. It really opens up with in a compassionate and accepting way to their thoughts and feelings. When that person walks through the door and I'm behind my eyes, I have a whole additional world to guide me, other than the game I'm playing and the pull to put on a mask and pretend. I came come in there as a human being and connect to another human being. When you do that, things go better. People feel connected. Nobody wants to walk around in a clown suit all the time. Leaders think they have to walk around in a clown suit and treat others like objects to be moved around, like pegs in a machine."

Action Item 48:15

<https://stevenchayes.com/>

Take a thought that you know has been a problem for you, that pushes you in a direction where you don't want to go. Write that down, and let's just take the things we've talked about here and try them out. Let your experience actually apply. For example, distill it down to a single word, say it out loud, fast, for about 30 seconds.

Just watch what happens. We've done pretty much 20 studies on this one, little technique. It's one of hundreds that are in the book.

Or ask yourself, how young were you when you first ever had thoughts like that? When you first ever wondered whether you were good enough, lovable enough, smart enough? Take the time to picture yourself at that age. Now, take these thoughts that you're running around, trying to race and make different, and have you as a child say that thought out loud in your imagination. What do you want to do? My guess is you don't want to slap the kid, you don't want to say 'Stop it.' My guess is you probably want to hug the kid. So have a little bit of compassion for yourself. You're a human being and we're historical creatures."

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