



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #178

Jim Harshaw Jr Solo- Steve Nicotra life lessons

I talk a lot on this podcast about how to live your life right. How to focus on the important things and have goals in the right areas of your life. And I talk about failure. Failure is hard. But failure, by definition, is in your control. It's caused by choices you make. And because of that, you can adapt, iterate, learn, and improve.

But sometimes, life throws curveballs at you. Sometimes you face impossibly tough situations that are outside of your control. Like the death of a loved one. On December 7th at 5:30 am, my brother-in-law, Steve Nicotra, passed away unexpectedly. He had a rare and relatively minor tumor that no one knew about. And due to a variety of unique situations, it led to his passing.

But even when terrible things happen, you can always find something positive. For me, there were amazing lessons that I learned from him. Most of these lessons really came about from learning more about his life from family, friends, and colleagues in the days and weeks following our loss.

This podcast episode is dedicated to Steve and all the lessons he taught me. But this isn't just about Steve. This is about YOU. These are lessons that will guide you in living your life intentionally and putting the right things at the top of your priority list.

Quotes

"When you live your life in a certain way, your impact goes far beyond your days here on this Earth."

"Relationships precedes everything else when it comes to setting goals."

"You can always find the funny, the humor, even in tough situations."

"The good life isn't always what we think it is. Sometimes the good life is simplicity, love, relationships, hard work, dedication, consistency etc."

Lessons Learned From Steve Nicotra

1. Relationships

Steve was an accountant by trade. I just assumed he went to work every day and locked himself in his office for 8 hours and came home at the end of the day. But that wasn't the case. There was this overwhelming amount of love that was poured out at his funeral. Over 500 people showed up. A lot of people he worked with, a lot of family, a lot of friends and just other people from around the community, people who were not even from his company.

For example, one of the handymen that worked in his building, he retired 6 years ago and he showed up for the funeral. He said, 'Every day we would get coffee and Steve would talk to me. He didn't talk down to me. He just wanted to talk. We were just buddies.'

He's a great family man, but the importance of his relationships extended beyond just his family, into his work life and his professional life. It showed in that love that came back to my sister and her family and will continue to come back for a long, long time because of those relationships outside of his home.

2. Consistency

Steve worked at his company for 28 years. Because of this, he had this institutional knowledge which increased his value. He worked his way to the top, to being CFO. The consistency of showing up day in, day out with a great attitude brought him a lot of success. I just learned that the stability and the value of deep relationships that the consistency brought to his life.

3. Humility

He never put himself over anybody else. He's very humble in his personal life and his professional life. I didn't even notice how big his job was until after he passed. I went down to his workplace and spent some time with his boss. It was amazing to really understand the impact and the loss not only relationship-wise but how it would impact the organization overall. He was highly valued but you would never know that from the way he talked about things.

4. Finding the Perfect Fit

Steve had a job that wasn't entrepreneurial but it was a perfect fit for him and it's

important to find the perfect fit for you. Everybody's got some sort of business idea. I'll be honest, he had some business idea of his own that we talked about from time to time. But he really found what worked for him and he stuck to it. He was very successful because of that. Entrepreneurship versus the 8-5, you have to find what fits you professionally and personally of course.

5. Humor

Steve always had a perfectly timed sense of humor. He wasn't a comedian but this guy could just cut the tension with a joke or with catching you off guard with something goofy or silly. Shaun who gave one of the eulogies at Steve's funeral just made it known how funny he was.

Right after Steve got his marriage license, he emailed a copy of the license to my mom. Steve has never been married before as far as we know. When he emailed the certificate to my mom, he doctored it to say that he had been married twice previously. Steve just told my sister 'Your mom is going to be calling you, freaking out. Just go along with it.'

He would always be pulling these little pranks, these little practical jokes, just to lower the tension, keep everybody laughing a little bit, keep everybody off-guard a little bit. So just the value of that humor is going to be deeply missed but something that you can always keep in mind.

6. Doing What Makes You Happy

Your job does not have to be your identity. You can do one thing at work and you can be totally something different at home that doesn't seem congruent. You could be a plumber and a wine connoisseur. You could be a teacher and an amateur race car driver on the weekends. You could be a white-collar CFO and love working with your hands and driving a beat-up truck on the weekends.

So, filling yourself in different ways. Having an occupation that aligns with you, but also have hobbies and things that you do that you care about that align with you. Make sure you're doing things that are important to you.

7. Simplicity

I learned that you don't have to be everything to everyone. You don't have to say

yes to every opportunity. Saying yes to one thing means inherently saying no to something else. Be clear about what's important to you. Be clear about what you want and cut out the things you don't want.