



JIM HARSHAW, JR.

Clarity of Action. Peace of Mind.

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #391

Unlocking the Science of Success Through Failure: Insights from Harvard Business Review and Kellogg School of Management

In this episode, I take the concept of [Success Through Failure](#) from being “motivational” and “inspirational” and examine it with a more scientific approach.

Some of you (like me!) need to hear not just the emotionally appealing stories, but also the science and the truth behind achieving success despite— and because of— failure.

So if you are one of those people, then this episode is for you.

Of course, we’re not just going to look through a “boring” academic lens, but through real-world learning that applies directly to you and can change your life.

By the end of this episode, you’ll have a single, actionable takeaway that you can apply and put into work so you can turn failure into success. Hit play now!

Top Quotes From This Episode

“If you fail once or twice and you never try again, you are guaranteed to end with a failure.”

“Every winner starts as a loser, [but] not every loser becomes a winner.”

“The longer you wait, the more likely you are to fail.”

“Culturally, failure’s not truly viewed as something we can learn from. [What] about you? Are you willing to accept your own responsibility and make change?”

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **In this episode (0:41):** Learn how to use failure and turn it into success by reflecting on two main pieces that discuss the science behind it.

Numbers behind failure and success

- **A study of 3 data sets (5:13):** The 2019 study "[Quantifying the dynamics of failure across science, startups and security](#)" looked into several data sets' average number of failures before success happened.
- **Learning between attempts (9:49):** The study suggests that success is guaranteed by learning, not persistence or failure.
- **Time between attempts (11:01):** If you fail faster and get up faster, you're more likely to recall your actions and mistakes, and as a result, you're more likely to succeed.

The importance of tolerating failure

- **3 types of failure (12:57):** The [Harvard Business Review article](#) written by Amy Edmonson identified 3 kinds of failure, listed from bad to good:
 - **(13:27)** Preventable failures
 - **(14:52)** Unavoidable failures
 - **(16:33)** Intelligent failures
- **Tolerating failure (19:22):** Failure is hard to accept due to its emotionally charged nature and negative cultural connotation, and yet it needs to be tolerated because of the knowledge that it provides.

What can you do right now?

- **[Productive Pause \(20:34\)](#):** Hit the pause button, learn, reflect, and create action items.
- **Download now! (21:09):** [Success Through Failure Discovery Exercise](#)

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

["Quantifying the dynamics of failure across science, startups and security" \(Nature journal, Vol. 575\)](#)

["Strategies for Learning from Failure" \(Amy Edmonson, Harvard Business Review\)](#)

[JimHarshawJr.com/SPEAKING](#)

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Other Episodes Referenced

[#342 The SEAL Who Killed bin Laden: Robert O'Neill on Fame, Jealousy, and PTSD](#)

[#333 Black Hawk Down: Army Ranger Keni Thomas Recounts the Battle of Mogadishu and Powerful Leadership Lessons from the Battlefield](#)

[#390 Turning Setbacks into Comebacks: An Interview with Olympic Gold Medalist Leah Amico](#)

[#246 & #247 Interview with Tim Ferriss: Secret \(or Not-So-Secret\) Routines, Experiments, and Absurd Questions from a World-Class Performer](#)

[#347 A New Approach to Fitness and Nutrition that Helps People Get and Stay on Track with Kathleen Trotter](#)