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From Setback to Success Failure is Never Final

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Failure is never a final outcome. So, how do you turn setbacks into success?
If a setback happens to you, what exactly should you do?

Famous Setbacks

Monty Robert, the famous "Horse Whisperer" developed a revolutionary process to train horses in less time and without abuse. He was ushered into a billion-dollar partnership in a thoroughbred racehorse business with publishing giant Hastings Harcourt. Monty Robert was abruptly dismissed and his business shuttered when Harcourt accused him of deceit and defraud.

Steve Jobs created Apple, and was then fired by Apple. His family and friends feared he was so devastated that he might commit suicide.

Jimmy Carter says he felt "fired by the American public" when he failed to become re-elected after his first term as President of the United States.

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter manuscript was rejected by more than 15 publishers.

Oprah Winfrey was fired as an anchor in Baltimore, where she faced harassment and sexism.

Steven Spielberg was rejected by the University of Southern California, School of Cinematic Arts many times.

Vincent Van Gogh sold only one painting during his lifetime, shortly before his death.

Author Theodor Seuss Geisel, known as Dr. Seuss, was rejected by 27 different publishers with his first book.

Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper for "a lack of ideas."

As a child, Albert Einstein had problems communicating and could not learn in traditional ways. His Ph.D. thesis on special relativity was rejected twice, accosted only when he changed one word.

Beatles manager Brian Epstein "shopped" their music around to so many music producers that rejection was the norm.

*All of these famous people have one thing in common. They persisted in the face of failure, and later encountered **unprecedented success**.*

How Setbacks Fuel Success

All of these people above went on and each persisted to later (huge) success. How do setbacks enable us to shape the strengths and resolution to build even more success? How do they provide the learning that builds the next level of performance? *Getting it wrong is part of the learning path to getting it right.*

In "Firing Back: How great leaders rebound after career disasters", Jeffrey Sonnenfeld of Yale and Andrew Ward of the University of Georgia describe five steps for fighting back:

1. **Don't give in.** Fight it, choosing the right battles to fight.
2. **Don't retreat into your cave of grief.** Use the support of others to help you.
3. **Don't blame yourself.** Put things into context, keep your self-esteem.
4. **Show your capability.** Prove you are good.
5. **Set yourself a mission that will drive you.**

A Setback is the Temporary Bridge to Success

Monty Roberts was awarded a portion of his horse farm from a judge overseeing his business breakup. He went on to publish "The Man Who Listens To Horses", a New York Times best seller for 52 weeks, and built a business empire teaching others his methods. He recently received the MRVO (Master of the Royal Victorian Order) from the Queen of England for his force-free training discoveries and humanitarian work.

Steve Jobs took some time off, cycling around Europe, returning to the United States to launch his new company, NeXT, which he sold to Apple in 1996. Jobs became CEO of Apple again in 1997. He went on to introduce an array of products that include the iPod, iPhone, iPad and a range of computers used worldwide. By 2012, Apple was the most highly capitalized company in the world.

Jimmy Carter rebounded from his sense of being fired with his humanitarian work that won him a Nobel Prize in 2002. J.K. Rowling became the first billionaire author ever. Oprah Winfrey rebounded and amassed a media empire. Steven Spielberg went on to a career spanning decades, gathering three Academy Awards along the way. Despite the stress on his financial and emotional well-being, Vincent Van Gogh was later recognized as a true master. Author Dr. Seuss' books are children's classics and have sold over 600 million copies. Walt Disney built an empire that is still thriving today. Albert Einstein went on to win the Nobel Prize in physics, and his theory on special relativity corrected the errors of Newtonian physics. The Beatles are an international treasure, whose music and lyrics live on today.

All of these breakthroughs occurred because each individual was willing to persist, even in the face of rejection and failure. We call this **resilience**, and it is a strength that you can nurture in yourself.

Failure is Not Final

Failure isn't final. The long road of negotiation and renegotiation is never over. A great example of this was the Good Friday peace agreement struck in Northern Ireland. Then U.S. envoy George Mitchell led the process, describing it as "700 days of failure and one day of success."

How Can Setbacks Inform your Potential to Rebound?

Take a look at the following model. This model will help you define your attitude about your ability to rebound.

Do you operate above or below the line?

The On-Target Rebound Model

After a setback, think about the behavioral options you have:

On-target rebound behavior:

- ✓ Actively seek solutions to problems
- ✓ Own the solutions and do the repair work yourself
- ✓ If needed, move in a different direction
- ✓ Implement best way forward
- ✓ Try again if you fail
- ✓ Repeat

Off-target behavior:

- ✓ Blame others
- ✓ Ignore – it's not *your* problem
- ✓ It can't be done!
- ✓ You don't have enough time / resources / help, so don't even try



Whatever you do, get going! Failures teach us how to move ahead and learn new and improved ways of performing. CLI offers a workshop on rebounding called the Bounce Back Rebound Strategy Workshop.

Click [here](#) for information on how to offer the workshop in your organization, or contact Dr. Susan Cain at scain@corplearning.com.