

SUMMARY

FAIL FAST, FAIL OFTEN

RYAN BABINEAUX AND JOHN KRUMBOLTZ



Summary of “Fail Fast, Fail Often” by Ryan Babineaux and John Krumboltz

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Learn how your failures can actually help you get ahead.

Introduction	5
Stop Waiting For Happiness to Happen	6
Fun Can be Constructive	8
Failing Isn't Fun	10
Don't be Afraid to Look Silly!	12
Fall in Love With Learning	14
Final Summary	16



QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

Go to QuickRead.com/App now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.

Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.



Introduction

Failure. If we really stop to think about it, it's probably our number-one fear, far outweighing our phobias of snakes, heights, or spiders. We're afraid of failing a class. Failing to get a good job. Failing when we ask that girl out on a date. Failing our try-out for a sports team. In fact, we're so afraid of failing that we often allow that fear to rule our lives. That might mean that we never submit a poem for publication because we're afraid of it being rejected or we never apply for our dream job for the same reason.

But no matter what form your fear of failure takes, it's never okay to let it hold you back. Because although it might surprise you, your biggest failures can often lead to your biggest success! And through the course of this book, we're going to unpack our fear of failure and its impact on our lives along with the author's top tips on how you can beat it and succeed.

Stop Waiting For Happiness to Happen

I'll start this chapter by admitting that I'm easily the first to be guilty of this. It's so easy to sleepwalk through the sad, dreary, or mundane parts of your daily life while daydreaming about a fairytale future. And because you can so clearly envision yourself in that great house or that fulfilling job, it's also easy to embrace that little fantasy in one of two ways. You might, for example, subconsciously elect to let that cherished daydream exist in your head, perfect and untouchable. After all, if you don't make an effort to make it come true, it never gets sullied by the harshness of reality. But if you don't do that, you might also choose to simply wait for that future to happen to you. Although you might not realize that's what you're doing, many of us get so caught up in imagining that moment when we start to feel better, when our lives look radiant, that we forget to take practical steps to make it happen.

But no matter what your choice is, the truth is that neither of those options are ever going to bring you the life you want. That's because, whether we realize it or not, what's holding us back at the core is fear. Maybe you're afraid that if you try to chase that life, you'll fail and you'll be even sadder than before. Maybe you're afraid that you don't have the skills or talents necessary for your dreams to become reality. You might even think that you need a foolproof plan in place or that all the stars have to align before you take any steps toward self-improvement. But nothing could be further from the truth! In fact, instead of bringing you closer to achieving your dreams, this mindset is the enemy of growth. And it's ultimately what will cause you to remain stuck in a rut, wistfully wondering why you never got that life you always wanted.

So, what can you do to get out of the rut? Well, for starters, you can concentrate on using the present moment as a stepping stone towards the future happiness you want. Put simply, that means that instead of waiting for happiness to just happen to you sometime down the road, you should start actively seeking little everyday moments of joy in the present, curating

and collecting them until you build a happy life. For an example of this in action, the author cites a psychological study from Cornell University in which doctors decided to cheer themselves up by eating a bit of candy before talking to patients.

Because delivering tough news to patients all day is, understandably, very stressful, the researchers wanted to know if even small pick-me-ups could help alleviate that stress. And the result was overwhelmingly positive! Not only did the doctors feel better while they were battling their daily grind, they found that injecting just a little bit of positivity into their day helped them increase their productivity and deliver more accurate diagnoses! So, the key take-away from this chapter is that, as corny as it sounds, attitude really is everything. And if we cultivate a positive attitude and take advantage of the opportunities that come our way, we can create a better future faster!

Fun Can be Constructive

Everybody loves fun, right? But we've all probably heard the sayings-- all those platitudes which remind us that having fun won't get us a good job or help us get ahead in life. But the authors are here to tell you that that's actually not true! In fact, fun can not only liberate you from fear, it can help you create a successful future! How does it work? Well, here's a hint: motivation is key. Motivation is uniquely important because, as we've all discovered at one time or another, it is really hard to stay motivated and succeed at something you hate. Sure, you can force yourself to persevere with your math homework because you know you'll fail that midterm if you don't, but you're unlikely to be joyful or successful if you'd rather clean the floor with a toothbrush than sit down to study math. The authors understand this well and that's why they've hit on the ideal formula for fun. (Who knew that was a thing!)

After conducting some research and consulting several leading psychologists who study happiness, they determined that for you to be your happiest and most successful, the good in your life should outweigh the bad 3:1. That means that for every negative in your life, you should have at least three positive things that counteract it. Don't overthink it, though; those positives don't have to be big things like a vacation to the Bahamas or winning the lottery. Instead, they can be small moments of everyday joy like sipping your favorite iced coffee or reading a good book by the lake in the sunshine. It can even be as simple as developing a Friday night ritual where you get your favorite takeout and watch the newest episode of your favorite show.

These small things might seem irrelevant, but actually, they make a huge impact because you're investing in your happiness. By filling your days with little moments that bring you joy, you're making deposits in your happiness bank and reminding yourself that you always have something to look forward to. And that's actually invaluable! But if you find yourself struggling to identify what brings you joy, the authors recommend an

activity to help you get started. You can begin by making a list of your favorite places and rank them in order of how much you enjoy each one. So if, for example, you hate your job and your office scores at a -1 in terms of your happiness, you might try going to your favorite bar after work, which has a happiness score of 10. Likewise, if your favorite coffee shop or local library scores at a 9 or an 8, you could mix it up some days and go there. The important thing is to gravitate towards places and activities that maximize your happiness and counteract the negatives.

Failing Isn't Fun

But now that we've talked about the things that bring you happiness and the relationship between fun and success, it's time to return to our discussion of the not so fun side: failure. Because if we accept that we need to seek happiness in the everyday moments of life and actively have fun, we might find ourselves wondering how it follows that failure can be helpful if it isn't fun. But although hearing this might throw us for a loop, the truth is that failure is often the fastest path to success! To prove that point, let's just take a look at the example of Elton John.

Today, we all know Elton as an international superstar, the musical genius who's crafted the soundtracks of our lives. But he wouldn't be the Elton John we know today without one spectacular failure. You see, back when he was just an average guy in London looking for a big break, Elton auditioned for a major record label in the hopes of being signed with them. Unfortunately, he failed so miserably that he still cringes talking about it to this day. But his failure had a silver lining: without that bombed audition, he would never have met his future lyricist. Bernie Taupin was another young hopeful auditioning that day and he also didn't make it. But he did happen to make friends with Elton John. And where Elton was a piano star, Bernie was a wordsmith; together, they made the perfect team. Because without Bernie's lyrics, Elton would never have crafted the hits we know and love today and it's unlikely that he would ever have attained his current level of success. But because of that one failure which was so humiliating at the time, he opened the door for a spectacular success.

That's why, even though failure isn't fun, it's still valuable for us. Because it literally offers us the ability to experiment with trial and error, our failures enable us to identify what works and what doesn't. And from these opportunities, we get to grow. So, even if your failures don't make you the next Elton John, they're still crucial for your development because they help you get better. Just ask the founder of Starbucks! Howard Schultz knew he wanted to open an awesome coffee shop; it was his passion and his

dream. And sadly, it was also a complete flop. That's because, in his efforts to be different and original-- like putting the menus in Italian--he actually alienated prospective customers.

Since people are afraid of failure, even on a small scale, like ordering in a language that's unfamiliar, people were hesitant to try his shop. And so nobody came and his new business flopped. But once Schultz recognized the areas in which he was unsuccessful, he made an effort to fix them. And his next attempt-- what we now know as Starbucks-- was better for it! These examples just go to show that failure might not be fun and it almost certainly isn't comfortable, but it will help us grow. And if we keep at it, that growth will lead to success.

Don't be Afraid to Look Silly!

If you've ever tried to learn a new language, then you know that you sound pretty silly when you're starting out. In fact, you probably sound like a baby learning to talk for the first time and that can be embarrassing. Some people find it so embarrassing that it keeps them from trying again; they'd rather avoid an uncomfortable feeling than persevere and learn something new. And while that's a very relatable and very human feeling, it's important that we don't let it rule our lives. Because, unfortunately, if we live our whole lives in fear of failure or looking a little silly, we'll never try anything new! And that's exactly why the author's next piece of advice is to relinquish the fear of embarrassment!

To jumpstart your efforts at kicking the habit, they recommend keeping this truth in mind: when you let your fear of failure rule you, you fail twice. How? Well, think about it this way: when you don't do the thing you were planning to do, it's kind of like you've already failed at it. And secondly, when you do this over and over again, you create a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure that ultimately wreaks havoc on your worldview. Because if, for example, you want to ask that girl out, but you start thinking of all the reasons she wouldn't like you and talk yourself out of it, you've not only failed to take that chance, you've programmed yourself to believe you can't do it. So, the next time you're faced with a promising opportunity, you probably won't take that one either and then the cycle will just continue.

That's not what you want for your life! Because the truth is, even if you do look a little silly trying something, even if you fail, you'll be better for stepping out of your comfort zone. So, even if you ask your crush out and she says no, even if you feel so embarrassed, you want to crawl under a rock and hide, at least you took your shot! And maybe you've learned something about what to do next time-- something that you can build on and improve for the future so that when you try again, you'll have better luck. Because at the end of the day, that's the point: you tried. You challenged yourself. You were open to new experiences. And whether you've learned what you want

or what you don't want, what matters is that you refused to live a static life stuck in fear. And that's powerful!

Fall in Love With Learning

Did you have a “thing” as a kid? An interest that kind of consumed you for a while and became your defining passion in life? For me, it was sharks; for a lot of other people, it might have been dinosaurs or Greek mythology or horses. But whatever that interest was for you, for a certain period of time, you were in love with that thing, awash with the delight of learning everything you could about it. You read books, you watched movies, you asked questions, and you felt the pure, unbridled wonder of discovery. Now look back over your life and ask yourself... when was the last time you felt that way?

Sadly, for far too many of us, we left that joy behind in childhood, perhaps as early as first or second grade because it's during this time that we begin to feel the pressures of the education system and the opinions of our peers. We start to worry about whether our interests are cool enough to earn us the acceptance of others and we begin to suppress the facets of our personalities that cause derision. This is also the first time that we begin to feel the strain of deadlines and expectations; our innocent curiosity gets hammered out by the pressure to get our homework done on time and we feel our childhoods slipping away under the crushing demands of grades and schedules.

As a result, far too many people lose their love of learning during this time and our enthusiasm for discovery fades as school work becomes something we're forced to do. We begin to see learning as a means to an end-- a way to get that grade, pass that test, get into a good college, and then a good job. But what would happen if we fell in love with curiosity again? What if we started to get excited by learning and remembered that it doesn't matter if we ask the wrong question or fail at our first try-- the important thing is that we're trying something new? That's why the authors' next piece of advice is to transcend your fear of failure by rekindling your curiosity.

This is uniquely important because it requires you to adjust your perspective. If your ultimate goal is to advance your learning and grow through trying something new, you won't be worried about failure. In fact, you'll embrace it because you recognize that getting the wrong answer is just a stepping stone on the path to getting it right! Emboldened by your quest for knowledge, you'll rush into new opportunities proud and unafraid, eager to discover what each learning experience can teach you. This will also help you to cultivate moments of happiness in the everyday and keep you from getting stuck in a rut. Because again, if your focus is on learning something new, you won't allow yourself to say, "This is my thing and I'm only going to stick with one thing." Instead, you'll be excited to step out of your comfort zone and be open to things you never imagined you would like! And in the end, you'll find that you're living happier, healthier, and unafraid.

Final Summary

There's no doubt about it: failure is scary. It's also uncomfortable and as human beings, we don't like that. In fact, we're so afraid of failure that we often willingly confine ourselves to a dull, static, or unrealistic bubble in an effort to protect ourselves from failure. But the authors strive to combat that tendency with one central piece of advice: fail fast and fail often. Rather than shrinking from failure, they argue that we should embrace these moments as learning opportunities and welcome them because they help us grow.

After all, failure is inevitable; it's going to happen no matter what. So we might as well embrace the fact that it gives us an opportunity to learn through trial and error. By embracing failure, we get the chance to learn what is and isn't working for us and improve. And that's just one of the benefits! The authors also advise readers to remember that when we live in constant fear of failure, we ultimately fail twice: once because we never took advantage of a new opportunity and secondly because we're programming ourselves into a defeatist worldview. Fortunately, however, we can fight this by establishing a happiness ratio of 3:1, searching for moments of beauty in the everyday, and rekindling our curiosity.



QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

Go to QuickRead.com/App now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.

Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.

