

Learning From Failure

First Parish Church of Stow and Action, MA September 2016

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“For every time we make a mistake and we decide to start again:

We light this chalice.

For every time we are lonely and we let someone be our friend:

We light this chalice.

For every time we are disappointed and we choose to hope:

We light this chalice.” - *UU Reverend Maureen Killoran*

Check-in/ Sharing: This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share.

Learning From Failure:

“I would rather suffer a hundred failures than count myself among those timid souls who never know great success nor failure because they never tried. - *Teddy Roosevelt*

“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.” - *Thomas A. Edison*

“Failing is one of the best tutors in career development. Consider the story of a new bank president who went to meet his predecessor. Upon being introduced he quickly said, “I would like to know what have been the keys to your success.” The older man looked at him for a moment and replied, “Young man, I can sum it up in two words: Good decisions.” To that the young man replied, “I thank you immensely for that advice, sir, but how does one come to know which are the good decisions?” “One word, young man,” replied the old man. “Experience.” “That’s all good and well,” said the young executive, “but how does one get experience?” “Two words,” replied the old man, “Bad decisions.”” - *Lou Stoops*

“Winning is great, sure, but if you are really going to do something in life, the secret is learning how to lose. Nobody goes undefeated all the time. If you can pick up after a crushing defeat, and go on to win again, you are going to be a champion someday.” - *Wilma Rudolph*

“Do not brood over your past mistakes and failures as this will only fill your mind with grief, regret and depression. Do not repeat them in the future.” - *Swami Sivananda*

“Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” - *Nelson Mandela*

“It’s never too late to start over. If you weren’t happy with yesterday, try something different today. Don’t stay stuck. Do better.” - *Alex Elle*

People have many different responses to the concept of “failure”. For some, failure provides an opportunity for blame. Sometimes fear of failure can keep us from moving forward, and actual failure shakes our confidence. To counteract this, there are many striking examples of successful people who have demonstrated the universal message of learning from failure, having the courage to figure out what didn’t happen the way they expected it to, and taking the risk to try again, differently. Let us use this time together to explore what “learning from failure” means in our lives.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Does failing at something make you feel like a failure?
2. Do you have any memories of failures that made for good stories after the fact?
3. Have you ever found a new way to approach a problem after repeated attempts with your old approach just not working?
4. Can you recall a time when you learned from someone else's mistakes, whether by watching them or reading/hearing about their experience?
5. Have you ever struggled to let others learn from their own mistakes?
6. Can you describe any examples in your life in which a failure on your part made a positive difference in the end?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

Wrapping Up: How did you like this topic and session?

Closing Words:

“Face it. Some mistakes are too much fun to do only once.” - John Fortier

Adapted from the River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Davie, FL