



Episode #5: How To Fail Forward - Being Successful At Failing Part 1 of 2

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

failure, fail, expectations, thoughts, feelings, perfectionism, podcast, comfort zone, confidence, confident, training, agility, episode, event, toddler, feel, experience, outcome, avoid, deal

This is the agility challenge podcast with Daisy peel. You're listening to Episode Five. Welcome to the agility challenge podcast. I'm your host, Daisy peel. Join me as I talk about everything related to the mental side of the sport of dog agility. If you've ever felt overwhelmed by negative self talk or lack of confidence, or if your dog training to do lists seems so long that you don't even know where to get started, then this podcast is for you. For more podcast episodes, training, content and coaching from me, head to [www dot the agility challenge.com](http://www.thetheagilitychallenge.com) where members get access to monthly training and handling challenges. In addition to lead play, and a whole lot more. Let's dive in with today's episode.

Hey, everybody, and welcome to episode five of the agility challenge podcast. I originally intended for this to be one episode, and then when I got to thinking about it, and writing down the thoughts that I wanted to share with you guys, it turned into a two parter. So this is episode five, which is part one of two. This is a two part mini series on how to fail, and how to fail forward. So today, I want to talk about failure. It's something that all of us experience. And it's something that a lot of us struggle with. So I want to talk first about why you may be avoiding failure, and how that avoidance is holding back your training, and your handling, and your ability to compete. If you are going to shows



I want to talk about how to fail effectively, and how to change your mindset when it comes to failure. So one of the things that I'm going to ask you to do at some point during this series is to take a few minutes and do what I call a thought dump, where you take five to 10 minutes, and you either grab a pen and a pencil, or you grab your keyboard. Or if you're using your phone and you've got a dictation app or even the Notes app on your if you have an iPhone, the Notes app will work you can dictate and your thoughts that come right out of your mouth can be transcribed automatically to the written word. And this is important, I want you to dump your thoughts into written form.

Because I want you to be able to dump those thoughts, get them out of your head and leave them behind for a little bit. And then I want you to come back to those thoughts later and be able to look at them from arm's length. So what exactly is failure? Well, the dictionary definition of failure is simply the condition or fact of not achieving the desired or expected ends or ends.

This one's a trickier one, one that fails, a failure,

or the condition or fact of being insufficient or falling short. And it's definition one and three, well actually definition one, two, and three, I'm going to talk about all of them. Definitions one and two, they seem pretty benign. So definition, one is the condition or fact of not achieving the desired or expected and or ends. And then definition three is the condition or fact of being insufficient or falling short. It's conditioned to

one that fails. That's the one that trips us up. But really failure. I'm not talking about I am a failure, I'm just talking about failure. Failure is simply the condition or fact of not having achieved the desired end or ends. And that if we just look at it, it's just something didn't turn out. That's it just didn't turn out right



the way we expected. And it seems pretty benign. But most of us when we fail, we just kind of stop desiring. So we if we don't achieve the desired ends, we don't achieve the desired or expected end or ends. We just stopped desiring and stop expecting. And we kind of slip into this mindset of if you never try, you never fail. When we keep our expectations really low. And we keep recycling the same outcomes and we never get outside our comfort zone. And this cycle of just lowering your expectations and no longer desiring an outcome or expecting an outcome. It's a real bummer because that strategy anesthetizes us not just to the feelings that we experienced during failure, but also to the rush of joy that we can experience when we do meet desired ends or expected ends.

So we basically, in our attempt to anesthetize ourselves against failure and those feelings associated with failure, we end up anesthetizing ourselves to all feelings, failure and success because you can't have one without the other. And I'm going to keep coming back to that again. And again. The cool thing, though, is when you don't meet your own expectations, your feelings about that are based on what you decide to think about those failures, you get to choose, if you set out to do something, maybe win a class, or qualify for a national event or a try out event, and you miss the mark, or you don't reach expectations, or you don't accomplish what you set out to accomplish, or you go to tryouts, and you set out to make the team but you don't make the team, you get to decide what meaning you make out of that failure to meet expectations, you can think about it in a way that hurts your feelings, you can think about it in a way that's dejected and disappointed. And I know I've done that plenty of times, and then you'll experience negative emotion.

And then the irony of avoiding the risk of failure and the failure itself, because you don't want to feel the feelings that are associated with failing is that you're avoiding something that you really have complete control of. And that is, again, your feelings about failure, it's really important to remember that you are in



charge of your feelings about failure, and that those feelings are not happening to you. So most people will say failure is something that happens to me, and then I have to experience it. And if they're not saying that out loud, they're thinking it failures, something that happens to me, and then I have to experience it, I have to deal with it, I, you know, that just happens, I have to sort of ride the wave.

And what's really happened is that we simply missed an expectation or we didn't meet an expectation. And then we chose to make it mean something that hurts we decide to make failure means something that causes us to experience negative emotions. And that means that we can also decide that failure is not the end of the world, we can decide not to catastrophize failure, we can decide that failure is actually something positive. And I don't necessarily mean hearts and rainbows positive, I mean positive in the mathematical sense, additive. So we can decide that failure can be positive or additive. And we don't need to dread the very thing that we're creating in the first place, which is our own negative emotions surrounding failure. So let me give you an example. Because I've experienced a lot of failure. And I've also worked pretty hard in the past to overcome negative emotion surrounding failure. So let's say that I work really hard all year long to qualify for and be prepared for a big event. I'm really excited about it. I've worked hard all year on my fitness, my nutrition, my dog training and my handling. And I'm really putting a lot of energy into my preparation. My expectation at the big event is that I'm going to do really well, I'm going to be in the top 5% of the competition. That's my personal goal. I'm going to make a final or I'm going to make a team based on my performance at the event.

And then let's say I go to the event, and I don't do so well. I'm not in the top 5%. I don't make any finals. And I don't make a team.



And my thoughts are immediately I'm terrible. Why did I even waste so much time trying, I'm never going to do this again. And this feels awful.

But the reason it feels awful is that I'm making it about that there's something wrong with me and that I'm not any good at this stuff. So going forward, I avoid spending the time and energy to prepare for another big event. Because I want to avoid that whole cycle of expectation and failure, I might go to another big event. But if I don't bother to put in the energy to prepare, then I can set my expectations really low and avoid failure in the sense that I can do pretty poorly, well below my previous expectations. And then I can rationalize that I met my new expectations because I didn't have any. So it's quite the cycle. On the other hand, what about this scenario? I could spend all year preparing for that big event and I could go and not meet expectations. So let's say I didn't make that 5% But I made the top 20%

it at that big event. So I did not meet expectations. And remember, failure is just the absence of having achieved my expectations or goals, really. So I can really celebrate that I made the top 20% I mean really celebrated. No, it was not 5%, but it was top 20%. And then I can immediately start looking at why I didn't make it to the top 5% as I'd expected. So I can start asking myself, what can I learn from the results? What can I learn from the competitors? Who did make the top 5%? What can I learn from the errors that I made in my handling or training that kept me from the top 5%? How can I grow from this? And how can I change and adapt. And now because I've changed my thoughts about this failure, I'm feeling a whole different set of emotions, I'm motivated, my fire is lit up. And I am making plans already, I might even be making plans on my drive or flight home from the event I might even be making plans 10 minutes after I'm done with that last run at the event.



I really love this quote that I found. And that is if you want to increase your success rate, you need to double your failure rate. And that quote is at least attributed to a man named Thomas Watson who was an early CEO of IBM. And I think it's a great reminder that you can't increase one without the other success and failure, there are two sides of the same coin. So it's a good quote to remember, if you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate. And it's important because you can't have one without the other. If you try and anesthetize yourself to one, you're going to anesthetize yourself to the other as well.

And it's important also, because how you fail is going to matter how you think and feel about failure is the first step to learning how to fail effectively, in ways that will help you actually improve and grow as a trainer and learn and competitor.

But we're going to talk a little bit more in this episode and the next episode of this two part series about how failing is going to matter.

So failure is not meeting expectations. And success is meeting expectations. And to be able to meet expectations to succeed, you're going to have to not meet expectations a lot. So just like that quote, said, if you want to succeed more, you're going to have to fail a whole lot more.

You need to fail in order to succeed, and you're gonna have to fail a lot in order to succeed and even really, to know what success is. And then you're going to tweak, you're going to adjust, you're going to learn what doesn't work, and you're going to repeat times 1000.

And you can't learn about one without the other.



So

I also want to talk a little bit about perfectionism, because perfectionism and failure are also kind of walking hand in hand with one another perfectionism and avoidance of failure or fear of failure.

I talk a lot about social media in this podcast and how it can lead us to feelings of failure, inadequacy, anxiety, deprivation. And also, social media can further our ideas about perfectionism when we see lots and lots of videos, about people's achievements and videos of their perfect runs. So we tend to think that success equals perfection. And success really just means meeting expectations. And again, you have to remember that behind every success is a lot of failure. A lot of trying again, over and over and over again, there's really no such thing as perfection. If you engage in perfectionism, you're very likely going to be engaging in avoidance of field failure, you're going to stay in your comfort zone, you're going to stay where you know, you can do things, right, and then you're just, there's no action and you're not growing. So I want to go back to the thought model that I've introduced in previous episodes, where circumstances objective circumstances are facts, trigger your thoughts, which then you have feelings about. And you take actions based on your feelings and your actions yield results that serve as evidence of those original thoughts. So if we're talking about perfectionism, and if you say, I just want to do everything, all right, and if I can't do it perfect, I'm not going to do it at all.

That's perfectionism. And a lot of us can suffer from perfectionism if I can't do it perfectly. I'm not doing it at all. So what are the thoughts and feelings behind that? Perfectionism? Are your thoughts and feelings about perfectionism and failure designed to protect you from failure by giving you an excuse not to take action. If I can't do it perfectly, I'm not going to do it at all. So you won't take action, because



you know, you can't be perfect. So your perfectionism keeps you from putting yourself out there, it keeps you from the inevitable failure of trying to do things that are outside your comfort zone. And then we're right back to being anesthetized from not just the failure and the feelings associated with failure, but the successes as well.

So if you're a perfectionist, and you do take action that leads to failure, you know, that you're just going to beat the hell out of yourself. When you fail, you're really going to beat yourself up, you're going to tell yourself, you're terrible, you're going to be rate yourself or even having tried, you're going to tell yourself, see, I told you this would happen. Look, here's the results, serving as evidence of those original thoughts.

So if you think you're a perfectionist, or if you tend to have perfectionist thoughts, instead of engaging in perfectionism, and instead of just bruising yourself incessantly for failing, what if ahead of time you make a deal with yourself. Now, here's the deal that you're going to make about failure, you might want to grab a pen or a pencil and write this down, or just listen to it, watch it if you're watching the video, and then go back 30 seconds and listen again. So here's the deal you're going to make with yourself ahead of time.

Hey, there, I'm going to go out, and I'm going to try to do this thing that's outside my comfort zone. I'm going to go to tryouts, I'm going to try and make a team, I'm going to go to a national event, I'm going to go to a regional event, maybe it's just I'm going to go to my first show.

And there's a nonzero chance for sure that I will not meet this goal or expectation of doing this thing. It could just be training, running contacts, it could be



training weaves, there's a nonzero chance that I'm not going to meet my expectation, I'm going to fail, and I'm going to fail a lot. But when I fail, I am telling myself, I'm gonna have my own back, I'm going to maintain that internal integrity, I'm going to remain, I'm going to behave with integrity. When it comes to me, I'm going to treat myself with honor. And I'm going to treat myself with respect. And I'm going to be proud of myself, for putting myself out there. I'm going to use my failures as feedback so that I can continue to grow and progress. And so that I have a better chance of meeting expectations in the future. I'm not going to say mean things to myself, about myself, I'm not going to quit, and I'm not going to give up. And all of that all of that conversation, you're going to install ahead of time. And you're going to find ways to remind yourself of that you're going to write it on a card, or write it on your hand. Internal integrity is a really good shorthand for me to remember that stuff.

But you're going to prepare yourself for how to deal with the inevitable failure to meet expectations. And then having done that, you're going to be more willing to step out of your comfort zone. And you're going to be more willing to take risks.

And the risk, what is the risk? Really, what is the risk that you've been avoiding taking the risk really is the risk really is not that you're not going to accomplish XYZ the risk, if you sit and think about it, the risk really is a failing and experiencing the negative feelings of failure that you really don't want to experience.

All of which are under your control anyway. So that's really, the the biggest risk that you take is experiencing those negative feelings. But you're not going to experience those negative feelings



because you've had this conversation with yourself about what failure is and what failure isn't, and why you experience the failure in the first place.

I like to think about a puppy, trying to learn to walk or run or a toddler, but puppies are cuter for me. So I'm gonna think about puppies. And there's there's just so much failure, there's a lot of falling and stumbling and getting up again, and there's just no problem with it most of the time. I mean, sometimes if it's a toddler, there's crying involved, but typically they just get up and dry again.

So what would happen if at some point that puppy or that toddler stopped trying, what if they just lay down and said, I don't know. I think I've had enough of this. I'm just not going to don't like this feeling. They've never learned to walk. But that's not what happens when we're really young. Or when preachers are really young. They just get back up again over and over again and every time they get up there are a little bit stronger, they get better at failing, they get better at maintaining their balance and correcting before they fail. And then here we are, we can walk, and we can jog and we can run and those sorts of things. It's also helpful to think about another topic that I addressed in a previous episode, and that is confidence versus courage. And when we're thinking about failure, and we're thinking about trying something that we're pretty sure we're going to fail out in the beginning, at least, we tend to want to draw confidence from our past. And that can be tricky, because if you're trying something you've never tried before, and you know that there's a likelihood of failure, then you're not going to have any confidence because you've not done it before.

And I've talked before about how you don't need confidence, when it comes to trying something new, you just need courage. And primarily, you need the courage to fail in front of others when especially when it comes to performance, where you're at a show or competition or even a class. And I'm going to



come back to that. Because it turns out that even if you haven't accomplished something before, you can still have confidence. And I'll talk about that. So hold on, I'm going to circle back to that. But I want to give you another example of something that you might try and fail at where you don't beat yourself up. Because you might be thinking, every time I fail, I beat myself up, it just happens. So automatically, I'm not even sure. I'm not even sure how else to deal with it. So here's an example for you. Let's say you you're thirsty, you go to the tap, to pour yourself a glass of water, and you're confident you can do it, there's no doubt in your mind, you can do it, you don't even think about it, you just get a glass, you go to the sink, you pour the water. And if you spill the water while you're pouring it, you don't even think anything about it. You don't beat yourself up, you don't say man, I really suck. Today, I am a failure at pouring a glass of water today, I might as well just go back to bed and try again, never.

It doesn't mean anything, right? We've poured a glass of water before we know we can do it, we immediately try again. We know it doesn't mean we're incompetent, we just try it again.

So there are plenty of things that we all do in our day to day lives where we fail at them. But also we do have that history of having done it before so we can be confident about it. So how do you be confident? How can you find confidence with something that you've never actually done? For me? Before I worked out some of these things, confidence was something I've never actually done always felt kind of fake. And faking confidence can be really tricky. So here's how you can find confidence with something you've never done. When it comes to an accomplishment or an expectation. You can't realistically be confident with something you've never done.

So if you've never taught a running contact to a dog before, you can't realistically be confident that you can do it. But you do know that if this is going to take you out of your comfort zone, you're likely to fail.



And you do know how to deal with that failure. So you can be confident in your ability to take those failures and fold them into your experiences, to take those failures in and use them as feedback for growth. Because you've done that before. You can be confident in your ability to try and fail and grow especially in front of others, because you've done that before. And you've also had conversations with yourself about how you're going to feel about failure and how you're going to think about failure.

You can be confident in your ability to get out of your comfort zone into that sweet spot where all the growth happens, because you've done that before. So you might not have any past experience with my example of running contests because you've never trained it before. You might not be able to have any confidence that you can train it. But you can absolutely be confident with the process, even if you haven't experienced the exact outcome. So you don't actually know what it's going to be like to have a finished running contest. But you're confident that you can go through the process of trying just out of your comfort zone, and failing and trying again, and failing and succeeding and failing and succeeding and failing until you have achieved the outcome. And then you can be confident with that. So for now, I want to end with this. I want you to think about your most recent epic failure, something where you put yourself out there, you tried something that was out of your comfort zone, you didn't meet expectations and had a big failure. I want you to take five or 10 minutes and do one of those thought dumps where you sit down and you either write with pen or pencil, or you type, or you dictate into an app on your phone or something that can transcribe and just get all of those thoughts down in written form. Do that for five to 10 minutes. And then I want you to take a look at those thoughts about that most recent failure, and you can do that right away. Or you can come back to it in an hour, or in a day or two, it doesn't really matter. But I want you to take a look at those thoughts about that most recent failure. And I want you to think about how that failure made you feel. And I want you to just notice those feelings, don't try to avoid them. Don't judge them. Don't judge yourself for having those feelings. Just really



observe the feelings that bubble up in response to those thoughts. And I want you to write those down as well.

And then again, you can take some time or not. Think about how do those feelings serve you? Do those feelings add to or take away from your sense of internal integrity, honor, and respect for yourself. And again, no judgment. I just want you to take some time to grow your awareness when it comes to your thoughts and your feelings about failure. And then next time in the next episode of this two part mini series on failure, we're going to talk about how to plan for and pursue failure when it comes to your training, handling and competition.

So until next time, leave your comments and thoughts at [podcast dot the agility challenge.com forward slash five](https://podcast.daisypeel.com/5/) since this is Episode Five. Once you've done a thought dump and explored your thoughts and feelings about your most recent epic failure, I'd love it if you would share them if you're feeling courageous enough to do that. And if you're enjoying this series, please let people know. I'd love it if you would take a moment to leave a review of the podcast in iTunes, or share it with others. You can help other people who are having similar thoughts and feelings about failure. And I want to give you a hint most of us are having similar thoughts and feelings about failure, even if we're not showing it. But if you share and review you can help others who are having those similar thoughts and feelings about failure, find the podcast and tune in.

Next week, we're going to continue in Episode Six with part two of this two part series on failure. And until then, I'll see you online. If you enjoyed today's podcast and you've got somebody in mind who you're pretty sure could benefit from discussing the things we talked about today, head to the webpage for today's episode, [podcast dot the agility challenge.com forward slash five](https://podcast.daisypeel.com/5/) and scroll to the bottom



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