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Think Outside The Box

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[Home](#) > Breaking the Cycle

Breaking the Cycle

Alexander Draghici 18.9K reads

Just like success, failure is a part of everyday life. People who live a dynamic life are prone to failure from time to time. They accept it, embrace it and learn from it.

However, those of us who struggle with depression seem to interpret failure in a completely catastrophic way. Why do some of us add a negative nuance to failure, while others see it as a learning opportunity? It all comes down to dysfunctional beliefs associated with depression and you are about to learn how that works.

The banner features the Explorable logo and the text "Quiz Time!" in a white, handwritten-style font. Below this, there are three quiz cards, each with a different image and title:

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Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
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Quiz: Flags in Europe

To the right of the cards is a button that says "See all quizzes =>" in white text.

You Have the Right to Choose

In order to fully understand how depression leads to a biased interpretation of failure, we have to take a peek behind the curtains.

Let's say you fail at a job interview. That's clearly a negative experience, one that will likely result in feelings of regret. But what happens after?

Well, there are two alternatives. You can either accept the fact that things don't always work out as you have planned, or you can lose yourself in a spiral of guilt and self-criticism.

Defeat Is a Choice

People who experience depression are more inclined to select the second option, even though they do it on a subconscious level. They tend to see failure both as proof of their incompetence, and the main reason why they often choose not to try again.

As you might expect, the final result is lack of motivation, as well as feeling of worthlessness and defeat.

Your Interpretation Matters

If we look at the problem from a purely objective point of view, a failed job interview doesn't make you less competent. Same goes for almost every other difficult situation life may throw our way.

We are not responsible for all the negative things that may happen, but we are responsible for how we choose to interpret them.

Failure Creates More Failure

People who interpret failure in a catastrophic manner, set themselves up for more failure.

Keep in mind that thoughts and emotions dictate our behavior. If you start a task knowing that you're already doomed to fail, your actions will follow the same pattern. A principle of human cognition (thinking, reasoning, etc.) is that our thoughts and emotions have to be in tune with our actions. If you want to achieve something, you have to envision success.

To sum up, people who experience depression tend to set themselves up for disaster, by having a pessimistic view on life. They, therefore, are not as motivated to act towards a positive change and thus end up further disappointed.

A New Perspective

Now that you know how failure creates a decline in one's quality of life, it's time to explore the silver lining of this cloud.

Strong, successful people are often created through failure. Consider the world's most successful men and women. They all have one thing in common – each of them has failed more times than you can imagine.

Failure Is a Point of View

The first and most important positive aspect of failure is that it builds resilience, provided you view it as a learning opportunity, rather than a catastrophe.

From this perspective, failure is a double-edged sword. It can either be devastating, or a tool

for becoming stronger and happier. What determines the edge you receive, is how you view failure.

The Trap of Self-Pity

A risk that we all need to keep in mind, is that failure may easily lead to self-pity and regret, if we do not concentrate on the importance of what we have learned through it.

The task before you now is to look beyond the negative aspects of failure and see what helpful insights you might gain.

Failure As a Teacher

Last but not least, failure gives you the chance to discover what personal areas you need to work on. In other words, you can reinterpret failure by seeing it as constructive feedback.

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