

The Formula for Failure and Success by Jim Rohn

Failure is not a single, cataclysmic event. We do not fail overnight. Failure is the inevitable result of an accumulation of poor thinking and poor choices. To put it more simply, failure is nothing more than a few errors in judgment repeated every day.

Now why would someone make an error in judgment and then be so foolish as to repeat it every day? The answer is because he or she does not think that it matters.

On their own, our daily acts do not seem that important. A minor oversight, a poor decision or a wasted hour generally doesn't result in an instant and measurable impact. More often than not, we escape from any immediate consequences of our deeds.

If we have not bothered to read a single book in the past ninety days, this lack of discipline does not seem to have any immediate impact on our lives. And since nothing drastic happened to us after the first ninety days, we repeat this error in judgment for another ninety days, and on and on it goes. Why? Because it doesn't seem to matter. And herein lies the great danger. Far worse than not reading the books is not even realizing that it matters!

Those who eat too many of the wrong foods are contributing to a future health problem, but the joy of the moment overshadows the consequence of the future. It does not seem to matter. Those who smoke too much or drink too much go on making these poor choices year after year after year... because it doesn't seem to matter. But the pain and regret of these errors in judgment have only been delayed for a future time. Consequences are seldom instant; instead, they accumulate until the inevitable day of reckoning finally arrives and the price must be paid for our poor choices—choices that didn't seem to matter.

Failure's most dangerous attribute is its subtlety. In the short term those little errors don't seem to make any difference. We do not seem to be failing. In fact, sometimes these accumulated errors in judgment occur throughout a period of great joy and prosperity in our lives. Since nothing terrible happens to us, since there are no instant consequences to capture our attention, we simply drift from one day to the next, repeating the errors, thinking the wrong thoughts, listening to the wrong voices and making the wrong choices. The sky did not fall in on us yesterday; therefore the act was probably harmless. Since it seemed to have no measurable consequence, it is probably safe to repeat.

But we must become better educated than that!

If at the end of the day when we made our first error in judgment the sky had fallen in on us, we undoubtedly would have taken immediate steps to ensure that the act would never be repeated. Like the child who places his hand on a hot burner despite his parents' warnings, we would have had an instantaneous experience accompanying our error in judgment.

Unfortunately, failure does not shout out its warnings as our parents once did. This is why it is imperative to refine our philosophy in order to be able to make better choices. With a powerful, personal philosophy guiding our every step, we become more aware of our errors in judgment and more aware that each error really does matter.

Now here is the great news. Just like the formula for failure, the formula for success is easy to follow: It's a few simple disciplines practiced every day.

Now here is an interesting question worth pondering: How can we change the errors in the formula for failure into the disciplines required in the formula for success? The answer is by making the future an important part of our current philosophy.

Both success and failure involve future consequences, namely the inevitable rewards or unavoidable regrets resulting from past activities. If this is true, why don't more people take time to ponder the future? The

answer is simple: They are so caught up in the current moment that it doesn't seem to matter. The problems and the rewards of today are so absorbing to some human beings that they never pause long enough to think about tomorrow.

But what if we did develop a new discipline to take just a few minutes every day to look a little further down the road? We would then be able to foresee the impending consequences of our current conduct. Armed with that valuable information, we would be able to take the necessary action to change our errors into new success-oriented disciplines. In other words, by disciplining ourselves to see the future in advance, we would be able to change our thinking, amend our errors and develop new habits to replace the old.

One of the exciting things about the formula for success—a few simple disciplines practiced every day—is that the results are almost immediate. As we voluntarily change daily errors into daily disciplines, we experience positive results in a very short period of time. When we change our diet, our health improves noticeably in just a few weeks. When we start exercising, we feel a new vitality almost immediately. When we begin reading, we experience a growing awareness and a new level of self-confidence. Whatever new discipline we begin to practice daily will produce exciting results that will drive us to become even better at developing new disciplines.

The real magic of new disciplines is that they will cause us to amend our thinking. If we were to start today to read the books, keep a journal, attend the classes, listen more and observe more, then today would be the first day of a new life leading to a better future. If we were to start today to try harder, and in every way make a conscious and consistent effort to change subtle and deadly errors into constructive and rewarding disciplines, we would never again settle for a life of existence—not once we have tasted the fruits of a life of substance!