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By Becky McCray

It's all part of my plan to redefine the word "failure" so it does not imply a negative judgment. Larry Wilson explained a different mindset this way. "I cannot fail; I can only learn and grow."

Your business will go through cycles of success and failure. Some days you will be toiling away in the valley of hard work, with little reward in sight. Later, you will find yourself on the mountain top of success, with an intoxicating view of rewards stretching in front of you. Eventually, probably repeatedly, you will fall. The mountain tops are wonderful, but we don't learn anything; the air is too thin up there. And you can't learn while you are falling; you're too busy, and possibly in too much pain. It's when you pick yourself up, re-examine your failure, and get back to work that you learn. Don't despair that you are in a valley; you have to make it through the valleys and the work and the lessons to be ready to reach the next mountain top.

We want our business to be smooth sailing, easy, no problems. It never seems to work out that way. Mary Kay Ash offered her thoughts. "Success is largely a matter of stumbling forward. We fail forward to success. It's a case of falling forward and getting up whenever you fall down and beginning again. Failure is an inevitable and necessary and a useful part of being successful. Actually we learn more from failing than from succeeding, because failure impresses us with what we did not do, and it impresses us more memorably than succeeding."

Zane Safrit says that not only do failures allow you to learn, they feed into each other, build on one another, until you have learned enough to reach the next success. That makes sense, doesn't it? You must learn, bit by bit, in order to succeed.

Change your mindset. Treat failure as necessary and extremely valuable. Don't beat yourself up for false starts, near misses or even wide misses. Charles F. Kettering said "Teach a highly educated person that it is not a disgrace to fail and that he must analyze every failure in order to find its cause. He must learn how to fail intelligently, for failing is one of the greatest arts in the world."

Perhaps the biggest mistake it to try to hide your failures. If you are trying to hide a failure, you can't learn from it. The shame is not in failure; the shame is in failing to learn from it.

So share your failures. Revel in them. They are leading you step by step towards success.

"Only those who dare to fail greatly achieve greatly." Robert Kennedy