

The Best Mental Safeguards Against Failure



At any time in one's career it is hard to accept failure, but great success is often the result of getting through seeming failures. There are times when circumstances outside our control bring about setbacks, obstacles, resistance, and temporary failures, but these don't affect everyone the same way. It all depends on your personal perception of yourself and what's happening around you.

We all must adjust to the fact that life brings gain and loss. The zigzag path to success is typical, far more so than a straight shot. To lose the Super Bowl or the Battle of Waterloo is a fact, a verifiable event that can't be turned into a win no matter how strong your psychology is. But this doesn't mean that the people involved are losers. The goal is to survive loss psychologically and emotionally.

Fending off the sinking feeling that can be overwhelming when you suffer a setback takes preparation. There are definite steps to take as a kind of prevention program before the loss occurs.

- 1. Detach from expectations.*
- 2. Go with the flow.*
- 3. Be patient with outcomes.*
- 4. Let the moment reveal itself.*
- 5. Go deeper inside for a better perspective.*

Detach from expectations.

Much unhappiness is created by clinging to expectations, and when those expectations fail, there's a feeling of failure. Practice letting your expectations be more open-ended. There are all kinds of productive results that may not fit what you anticipate. Don't be disappointed when circumstances change. Be more flexible about the outcomes you are willing to accept.

Go with the flow.

It feels reassuring when events turn out exactly as planned, but the norm is usually different. Life unfolds with uncertainty, and you need to go with the flow instead of resisting it. Competitive types want to constantly win, which involves controlling the game, any game. They may achieve remarkable success but at the cost of a deep fear of losing. Instead of trying to steer the river, sense its current and let it carry you along. You will survive life's twists and turns with much less stress.

Be patient with outcomes.

You don't have to adopt the attitude that everything happens for a reason in order to see that events often take unexpected turns. For some people this creates a sense of panic; for others it is proof that there is wisdom in uncertainty. Before you decide which perspective is true in your own life, don't jump to conclusions. Have patience with an unfolding situation and observe how it is moving before you react. Abrupt reactions guided by upset emotions are rarely correct.

Let the moment reveal itself.

It's impossible to confront any situation without imposing your own beliefs and expectations. Perception turns ordinary setbacks into disasters or a reason for obsessive worrying. Even though it is inescapable that we bring our own perception into things, when this goes too far, we aren't living in the present. We've buried the moment in opinions, reactions, biases, and judgments. Instead, learn to let the moment reveal itself. Look for the hidden potential that exists in almost every zig and zag if you are aware enough to see it.

Go deeper inside for a better perspective.

The best protection against failure is to be so centered and secure that setbacks don't rock you. This is achieved by going inside and finding out who you really are. Otherwise, you risk turning into a bundle of reflexes conditioned by the past. There is a steady state of "restful alertness" that meditation cultivates. At the very least, take a few minutes out several times a day for inner time, down time, and playtime. Stepping outside the fray is a simple way to renew your inner resources.

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