

Say “Nay” to the Naysayers

By Jonathan D. Sherman, LMFT | Relationship Strategist | Speaker

Essentially, I am in the business of change. One of the biggest obstacles I have observed that many people face in the pursuit of their goals are people who sit by the sidelines full of criticism and judgment. They are the naysayers—the breeders of doubt and stagnation. I have little time or interest in listening to those who say it can't be done. Many of my clients have happily proved them wrong.

Those who come to my office often have difficult challenges in their lives. What I admire about my clients is that something inside them has said, “Enough! It's time to change. It's time to make things better.”

Well, the truth is change is often hard. It is so much easier to criticize and be negative. Critics, though, are a dime a dozen and they bore me. Those who accept the challenge to improve their lives do not have it easy, but as they persevere they are very likely to obtain their goals. What better goal is there than to strive to achieve a great relationship? To improve their lives, their marriages, their parenting, their families and even their business relationships takes vision, courage and determination. To all of you brave souls who are working to make a better life I offer the following encouragement.

Famous “failures” set the example

Know any “famous failures?” Check with anyone you admire—in business, in family life, in sports, in history—and you will inevitably find a history of failure after failure after failure. They have all learned one important lesson: we only fail when we stop trying. The Japanese proverb says it best, “Fall down seven, get up eight.” I, for one, am grateful that these “failures” refused in the midst of their failures to listen to the critics. Here are some who have gotten up again:



23 publishers rejected **Theodore Geisel's** (Dr. Seuss) first children's book.



The first book that **Robert Pirsig** ever wrote took him 8 years to write. 121 publishers rejected the book. Finally, the 122nd publisher went on to sell over 300 million copies of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.



Fred Astaire kept a memo over his mantle from an early MGM talent scout who said of Astaire, “Can't act. Can't sing. Can dance a little.”



Walt Disney was fired from his first newspaper job for a “lack of ideas.” He went bankrupt several times before he became a name known worldwide.



When **Thomas Edison** was a boy his teacher told him he was too stupid to learn anything.

It took Edison over 2,000 attempts to figure out how to make the light bulb work effectively. When asked by a newspaper reporter how he kept his spirits up after so many failures Edison replied, “I never failed once. I just learned that inventing the light bulb is a 2,000 step process.”



Henry Ford failed and went broke five times before he finally succeeded.



Abraham Lincoln failed in business, lost most elections he ran in, and suffered a nervous breakdown.



Helen Keller, deaf, mute and blind graduated cum laude from Radcliffe College and went on to become a famous author and lecturer inspiring millions.



45 publishers first rejected the authors of the widely popular **Chicken Soup for the Soul** books. They were frequently told that, “No one

wants to read a collection of short, cutesy stories.”



Richard Hooker worked seven years on the war novel *M*A*S*H* only to have it rejected by 21 publishers.



Charles Goodyear spent every last dollar on five years of experiments trying to develop a rubber life preserver before he succeeded.



Babe Ruth, the “King of Swing” and the “Sultan of Swat,” struck out 1,330 times. Funny that most people don't remember him as a “failure.”



An editor told **Louisa May Alcott**, author of *Little Women*, that she'd “never write anything that people would like.” Actually, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson had tutored her. Considering her many works are still in print, it is safe to assume that she has indeed written something that people *do* like



Isaac Newton did poorly in grade school.



Beethoven's music teacher once said of him “as a composer he is hopeless.”



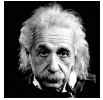
F.W. Woolworth got a job in a dry good store when he was 21, but his employer would not let him wait on customers because he “didn't have enough sense.”



Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. Did you know that Michael Jordan actually missed more shots than he made?



Steven Spielberg dropped out of high school in his sophomore year. He was persuaded to come back and placed in a learning disabled class. He lasted a month and dropped out of school forever.



Albert Einstein had trouble with school. Because he spoke haltingly for the first nine years of his life and would only answer after a prolonged period of reflection, Einstein's parents thought he was mentally retarded. His grades in school were so poor (except for math; he had logical intelligence) that a teacher asked him to quit, saying, "Einstein, you will never amount to anything." He failed his entrance exams to Zurich's Polytechnic Institute and had to reapply for the following year. His Ph.D. dissertation was rejected by the University of Bern saying it was "irrelevant and fanciful." Even after finishing school, he had a hard time finding and holding down a job. Meanwhile, in his spare time, he was busy formulating his first concepts of the theory of relativity. In an opinion poll taken by *The Washington Post*, historians and scientists voted Einstein as the most important scientist of the last 1,000 years.

One of my favorite quotes of Einstein's is, "If at first an idea isn't absurd, there's no hope for it."



Pablo Picasso's father pulled him out of school at age 10 because as a child, all he wanted to do was paint. He had enormous spatial intelligence, which was undetected by standard tests. Barely able to read or write his father hired a tutor to enable him to enter high school, but the instructor gave up since Picasso refused to learn math. Later, although he passed his art-school examinations with flying colors, he soon quit out of boredom. Then Picasso studied painting on his own and struggled for years before selling his first work. However, he later came to be considered a genius in his field by many art critics, and his

paintings have sold for millions of dollars. Yet, by conventional wisdom and the grades he made, he should have quit trying to be a success.



The founders of companies such as **Nike**, **McDonalds**, and **Sony** failed again and again.



Princeton University keeps a special list of its famous failures, too.



Sir Winston Churchill had a lifetime of defeats and setbacks. While Churchill was still young, his father thought he was so dim-witted that he would never be able to earn a living in England. A hyperactive child, Churchill enjoyed history and literature (he had great linguistic intelligence) but refused to study math and entered school at the bottom of the class. He failed the 6th grade. It took him three years to get through the eighth grade because he could not learn his English grammar correctly. Twice he failed the entrance exam to Sandhurst, the famous British military college. Finally, on the third try, he passed. Churchill went on to become a legendary statesman, including leading his country as prime minister through World War II. He later won the Nobel Prize for literature. Later in life he was asked to address the graduates of Oxford University where he delivered the shortest and one of the most eloquent commencement addresses ever given. He approached the podium and shouted, "Never give up!" Several seconds passed before he spoke again and repeated even more forcefully, "Never, never give up." He then sat down.

"Never, never give up!"

So will we all succeed just because we fail? Of course, there is more to it than that. Those listed here had passion and dreams. They didn't listen to those who said it couldn't be done. They kept getting up. They worked hard. Whatever

your passion, your endeavor in your life hang in there. Listen and learn from those who have been there. Learn from successful families, couples, and individuals. Understand the nature of failure. Learn how to use it. Learn how to face fear and how to risk.

In closing, I would like to share the following story shared by Harvey Mackay, best-selling author of many best-selling marketing and business books:

"How about the basketball coach who was trying to encourage his players to endure through a difficult season? He stood before his team and demanded, 'Did Michael Jordan ever quit?'"

The team replied loudly, 'No!'

He shouted, 'What about the Wright brothers? Did they ever give up?'

'No!' the team yelled.

'Did Muhammad Ali ever quit?'

Again the team hollered a resounding, 'No!'

'Did Elmer McAllister ever quit?'

There was a long silence. Finally one player was bold enough to ask, 'Who's Elmer McAllister? We never heard of him.' The coach snapped back, 'Of course you never heard of him—he quit!'"

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FREE "Failure" Activity Download

Go to MarriageEnvy.com to the Freebies section and download the full version of this article that includes a Scavenger Hunt based on this article and "Failing, 'Stupid' and Mistakes" posters to color and post around your house or school.

Jonathan D. Sherman, LMFT is successful at failing. He credits failing over and over for his great learning and success in life, relationships and business.



He is also a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and Relationship Strategist specializing in creating "greatness in relationships." He is experienced in assisting people learn how to improve their marriages, their parenting and themselves through skill development, life coaching, overcoming depression and anxiety, stress and anger management, and addiction recovery. He teaches extensively on a wide range of relationship topics. He is the founder of *The Marriage Academy* and *The Relationship Mastery Seminar Series™*. He works as a management consultant through *Five Degrees* to help increase employee engagement, resolve team communication problems, and create *WorkSmart* cultures. You may reach him at 801.787.8014 at MarriageEnvy.com.

Scavenger Hunt Activity

	Item
	The movie ET
	Something to do with dancing
	A Dr. Seuss book
	A Disney movie
	A light bulb
	A book about Helen Keller or a picture of her printed from the Internet
	A penny
	A baseball bat or baseball
	The book or video: Little Women
	A tire
	A basketball
	An apple
	Something to do with art, drawing or painting
	A car
	A can of chicken soup
	A piano book or piano
	A science book or textbook

Scavenger Hunt Answers

For full details and activity instructions visit:

<http://www.marriageenvy.com/great-relationships-blog/teaching-kids-to-fail-gloriously>

	Item	Person
	The movie ET	Steven Spielberg
	Something to do with dancing	Fred Astaire
	A Dr. Seuss book	Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel)
	A Disney movie	Walt Disney
	A light bulb	Thomas Edison
	A book about Helen Keller or a picture of her printed from the Internet	Helen Keller
	A penny	Abraham Lincoln
	A baseball bat or baseball	Babe Ruth
	The book or video: Little Women	Louisa May Alcott
	A tire	Charles Goodyear
	A basketball	Michael Jordan
	An apple	Isaac Newton
	Something to do with art, drawing or painting	Pablo Picasso
	A toy car	Henry Ford
	A can of chicken soup	Chicken Soup for the Soul authors
	A piano book or piano	Beethoven
	A science book or textbook	Albert Einstein