

Coaching Tip: How to Coach Your Clients Around Fear of Failure

Welcome to my coaching tip on how to coach your clients around fear of failure.

First, let's clear one thing up; there is no such thing as fear of failure. It's our thoughts about failure that creates our suffering, upset, fear and ultimately our stuckness... if that's a word. So, the next time your client (or you) says they're afraid to fail, you definitely want to clarify that what they're really afraid of is what they're making failure mean. That will help to unravel the beliefs that keep your client from taking their life in a new direction. Keep in mind however, that many of the "reasons" why people don't take risks or even enjoy their life is based on excuses such as "I need more time, I'll do it when I have more money, when the kids grow up, when I leave my dead-end job, when I'm less tired, or more prepared".

Although it's not a walk in the park to fail, the truth is that not being willing to fail is a lot worse than actually failing. Think about it, if you're not willing to fail, everything stays the same, nothing is new or fresh, you don't try new stuff. You only try things that you're comfortable with and don't get to discover any new talents or unrecognized interests. If you want to learn to surf, for example, but you're too afraid you might hurt yourself, you'll never know if this is something you might fall in love with – you know, the place where joy, passion and surprise lives. Last, not being willing to fail keeps you in the same ole "area of expertise" wheelhouse and you miss out on the joy of learning. In other words, you lose your motivation to experiment and ultimately your world begins to shrink.

So, when I'm coaching someone who is stuck, who's life has become small, who is afraid to dream because they are attempting to avoid failure, it's usually because they share the "I'm not enoughness belief" - more specifically they don't think they have the intelligence, talent or ability to succeed... they fail ahead of time, as my friend and colleague Brooke Castillo says. In other words, they act in ways that guarantee that they will fail before they even leave the gate.

So, one of the ways I work with people who want to transform their lives, pursue a new career, leave a dead-end relationship, or just be more adventurous and feel paralyzed by the idea of making a mistake or failing, is to play a little "how is this like that" game with them... okay, it's not really a game, it's more of looking at failure through a completely different lens so that failure becomes normalized rather than a measure of one's success or self-worth.

Here's the exercise:

- 1. When was the last time you accomplished something you were really proud of?**
- 2. How did it feel before you reached this accomplishment?**
- 3. Was it easy? Comfortable?**
- 4. Did it push you beyond what you thought you were capable of?**
- 5. What was the result of being pushed to your edge?**
- 6. What did you gain? What did you learn?**

The answer to these questions will show your client that success is contingent on one's ability to tolerate discomfort, uncertainty and nagging self-doubt and that they can do it anyway. It also shows the client that no one ever died from making a mistake (unless of course they were bungee jumping or walking a tight rope off a very tall building). The other cool part of asking these questions is that the client gets to explore what they gained and what they learned from that thing they were afraid of doing. That kind of feedback can't happen if they aren't willing to have that hands-on experience. For example, you'll never know if being a life coach is for you by reading or researching it - you need to try it on and actually coach a bunch of people to know if it's a fit or not. You can't get that from a book or from other people say. Last, these questions remind the client that

strength and resilience is born from the discomfort of failure. Growth can't happen unless you're willing to make a mess of things as soon and as often as possible.

Louis C.K. says, "The only road to good shows is bad shows. Just go start having a bad time and if you don't give up, you'll get better."

Finally, I ask my clients if they are willing to give themselves the gift of being a beginner rather than self-validating, proving that they are smart, perfect, have the right answers or have it all together. I let them know them by doing things from the lens of a beginner rather than an expert, it creates the optimal space for them to grow to evolve... plus it takes the pressure off to do it perfectly and just be more of who they already are or who they are meant to become.

I hope you enjoyed my coaching tip of the week... and, per usual, if you are enjoying these tips or have suggestions for future tips, please email me at Jackie@jackiegartman.com.

Cheers,

Jackie