Let Them Fail

Teaching students to accept adversity and persevere prepares them for life

By Dezoray Moore

Failure is productive. Failure is healthy. It is OK to fail, and students need to experience a healthy dose of failure in order to succeed. Many of our world leaders, most creative minds, and superstar athletes have failed in life at one time or another—and most of them failed big. But they learned from their failures, made the necessary changes, and continued on their paths to great success.

It's only natural to want students to be happy and flourish in everything that they do. Failure is no bed of roses for a student, nor is it pleasant for parents, teachers, and administrators. But adults must understand that it is counter-intuitive to protect students from failure. Students must be allowed to experience failure and use their problem-solving skills to help them navigate through it to achieve a more favorable outcome.

Help Students Fail

Educators and parents alike must be committed to helping students learn to fail, knowing that failing does not mean that the student is a failure. Adults must let students fail and support them throughout the process. And failure is a process—it evolves. Failure doesn't always have to be final, however. It can be transformative.

Students will find it helpful to know how to redirect their outcomes in a more positive direction. But they should also know when to accept failure, learn from it, and move on. All students need to have a clear understanding that failure is natural and learn how to handle it in a positive, appropriate, and acceptable fashion.

Children are resilient, and letting them fail builds character, lifts self-esteem, and allows them to accept defeat. We revel in children's accomplishments, achievements, and awards. We give them shoutouts,

praise, prizes, trophies, and gifts, and we attend ceremonies, banquets, and parties that celebrate their successes. Let's not forget to put forth the same amount of effort to teach students how to accept failure.

Students will experience setbacks, disappointments, mistakes, mishaps, miscalculations, defeat, losses, rejections, and trials and tribulations throughout their lives. When we let them fail, we help them become grounded, well-rounded individuals. And students who can accept failure graciously can transfer those skills to the classroom, sporting events, and individual and team competitions. Handling failure in a productive manner is preparation for life.

The Fear of Failure

Adults can teach students how to overcome the fear of failure by example. When we share our personal failures with students in an appropriate context, they begin to understand the complexities of life. This builds their confidence, and they will be more apt to explore their own more challenging and unfamiliar experiences. If they fail on these adventures, they can better pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and move on. When students can overcome their failures, they succeed in life.

No one is immune to failure, and that's why adults should let students fail. When children are protected from failure, they can't gain the necessary experiences they'll need to be successful in life.

As students mature and move on to college, career, and community, they will need to know how to deal with the setbacks, disappointments, rejections, and defeats that come with the territory. Whether it is a rejection to a college application, a layoff from a job, a breakup, or the loss of a loved one, it can be a traumatic experience.

Students who learn how to appropriately accept failure early in life are better prepared to handle adversity later in life. When students don't know how to deal with life's adversities, they may shy away from challenges, be complacent, lack motivation, stagnate, and remain dependent on others. They may succumb to peer pressure. They may get involved with drugs or crime. Worse, their low self-worth may push them to attempt suicide.

In order for students to succeed in life, adults must let them fail and teach them how to accept their failures appropriately. By doing so, they can learn from them and be better prepared if they are faced with the same challenges again.

Whatever the mantra one chooses—fail up, fail forward, or fail better—it should be a rallying cry for future success. Students must acquire the fortitude, stamina, and resilience to fail. In the end, students' failures will be beneficial and lead to success if they are willing to put forth hard work, tenacity, and perseverance. Let students fail and learn from their failures. When students overcome their failures, they succeed in life. P

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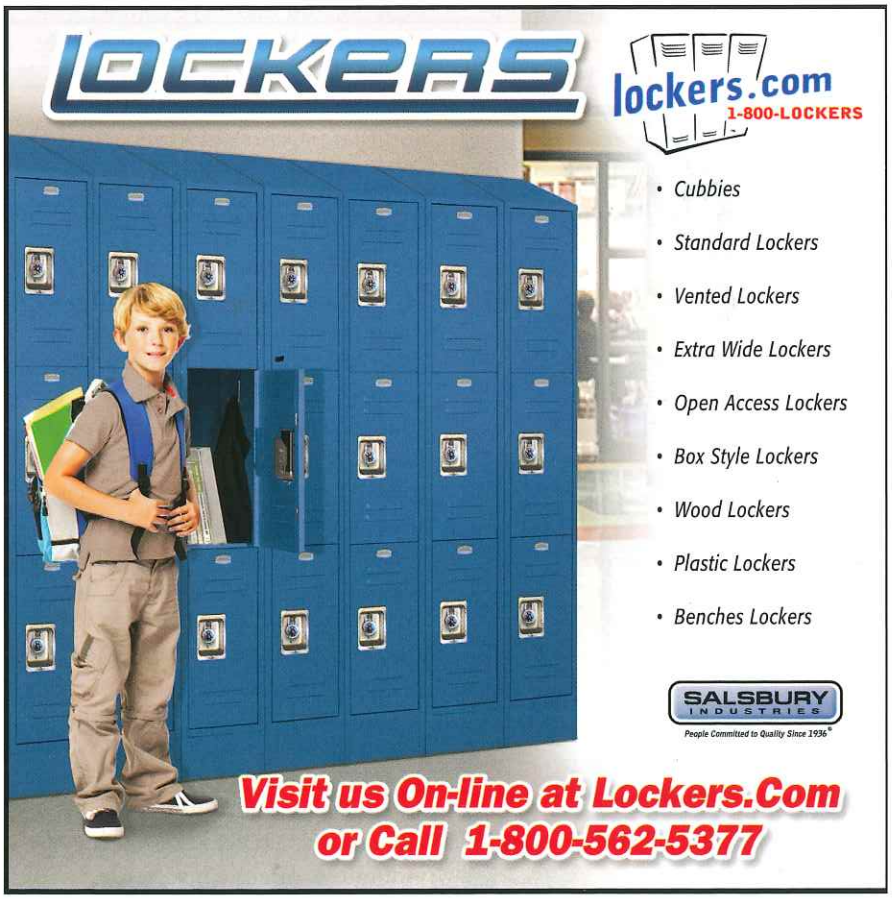
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