



Fall for SUCCESS

Read this story aloud or make copies for your group or team members.

99-Word Story

I ran for miles and miles beside my daughter as she learned to ride a bicycle. I was determined she would learn without ever falling down. For weeks we practiced.

Balancing her was awkward, especially when she turned away from me. But when she turned to my direction, I could support her as she leaned into the turn. And the harder she leaned, the tighter and faster the turn. So, turning a bicycle is like falling!

Eureka! To change your life direction, you have to take risks. You have to become an expert in controlled falling.

You can build upon the theme of this 99-Word Story by using some of the following questions for your own reflection or to spark a discussion within your team or organization.

Discussion Questions

- To what extent do you agree that if you are going to learn, you have to fail?
- Think of a time you learned something important. How badly did you fail during that process?
- How would you define the term “controlled falling”?
- Recall the last time you taught someone something. What opportunities did you create for controlled falling?

There are many ways to understand this story as the discussion questions suggest. If you or your group would like to compare or contrast your interpretation with an outside viewpoint, consider this analysis.

Interpretation

I once worked with an organization that helped people with cognitive and developmental disabilities. The focus of the

organization was to help people find a valued place in society; to become a contributing member of their community. For some, they needed a place to live. Others needed friends, people who cared about them, and worthwhile things to do. Still others needed a job that paid a living wage

But for many, these simple desires seemed beyond reach because of their disabilities. For those who had difficulty communicating with words, those who didn't understand social cues, or those who didn't have control of their physical movements, meeting people, making friends, finding work, or taking care of themselves was a challenge.

In order to take their place in society, people with disabilities need support. And, fortunately, there are many other people willing to provide that support.

But what should that support look like? With the complex needs some people have it would be easy to jump in and do things for them. It's faster and a whole lot easier. In fact, that's what many people in support roles do. They become caretakers filling all the needs of the person with a disability. They wear themselves out and, in the process, make the person with a disability dependent upon them.

This is great for job security but does little to help someone with a disability become integral to their community.

The people who provide the best support are those who think of themselves as teachers. They set up an environment where the person with a disability whom they support can try new things, practice new strategies, and make mistakes. These teachers know that people with disabilities have suffered incredible heartbreak from making mistakes. So they practice the art of controlled falling. They expect success but plan for failure – failure in just the right amount that the person they are teaching can experience success while also understanding they have more to learn. The support people call this a “just right challenge.”

A just right challenge is individualized. It encourages the learner to take a risk without being in danger. It makes the learner stretch their abilities far enough that they can see their own potential for greater growth.

For people with disabilities, children and parents, employees and supervisors, and in all types of learning, failure is important. It shows us how far we've come and how much further we can go. But no one needs to fail so

far that they break their elbow or their ego and never want to get on the bicycle again.

For More Information, see these books as reviewed in *The Firefly News Flash*:

Failure by Stuart Firestein

<http://www.thefirefly.org/Firefly/html/News%20Flash/2016/April%202016.htm#discoveries>

Nonsense by Jamie Holmes

<http://www.thefirefly.org/Firefly/html/News%20Flash/2016/February%202016.htm>

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