

Failure strikes without prejudice

BY MEG BURIK
Columnist

Failure lurks in the corner like an unwelcome guest

You usually can smell its stench before it is upon you, but sometimes it operates in a covert manner. Failure is inescapable.

Truman breeds the fear of failure like rabbits breed in the spring. Symptoms include shakes before tests, nausea from not achieving the GPA needed to graduate summa cum laude and might even include fainting, depending on your pre-existing conditions. I might be projecting my fear onto the student body, but I think as a whole, we primarily are a driven group of people. After all, Princeton Review admissions statistics for Truman boast an average high school GPA of 3.8.

The weight of failure rears its ugly head in other aspects of our lives, too. Failure to abide by the law might result in a smudged public record. Failure to stay faithful to a

significant other might lead to a horrible breakup. But things like the red judgment of an F at the top of a test or paper should not embody the sinking weight of failure that they tend to carry. Rather, these missteps offer an adjusted path forward.

If dealt with correctly, failures of all types can lead to a stronger, more complete person.

I remember in fourth grade I participated in a spelling bee. Despite being armed with hours of study, nerdy glasses and a gap-toothed goofy grin, I misspelled the word beautiful. That night when I cried in the shower (I didn't have much else going on in my life, give me a break), I traced B-E-A-U-T-I-F-U-L over and over in the condensation of the shower pane. Have I spelled it wrong since then? Absolutely not.

Sure, this is a pretty elementary example (yay puns). But it shows clear evidence of growth through mistakes.

Sometimes it takes an outsider's perspective to show us our own failures. As a natural self-defense mechanism, people tend to view themselves in the best possible light, and therefore cannot offer an objective perspective of themselves. This objectivity is easy for outsiders because they have no bias of self.

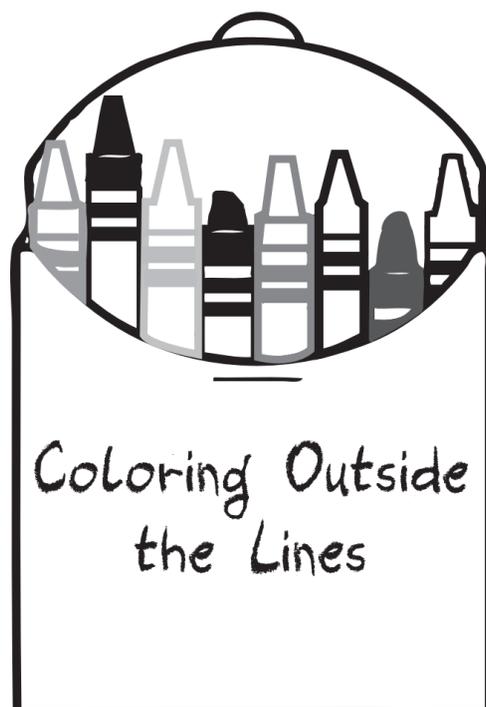
Let's say you receive a bad review at work. At your three-month review, your boss informs you that your professionalism leaves something to be desired because you still behave as though you are in college. While you might still be in college, Intimidating Boss-man says the workplace requires a certain level of maturity in your behavior. You might not have realized that your sporadic jokes bridging on the inappropriate offended anyone, but they do. Fail.

Yet because you received this criticism, you can step back and re-evaluate how you approach conversation

with coworkers. Adjusting your behavior will lead to more mature interaction in the future, and might even pave the way to new work opportunities.

It's one thing when you agree with those who pointed out your mistake. However, sometimes our own perspective of failure may differ from those offered by external critics. For example, I got my nose pierced a few months ago. Although I saw this feat as a triumph and an exciting accessory to complement my personality, my dear conservative parents thought I had failed myself and my future job potential. Discord between our own perspectives of failure and the perspective of those whose opinions matter to us might be difficult to handle.

But I argue that no matter if you fail in your own eyes, in the eyes of others or both, failure is a painful but healthy process, like defecating. Realizing the need for change within yourself

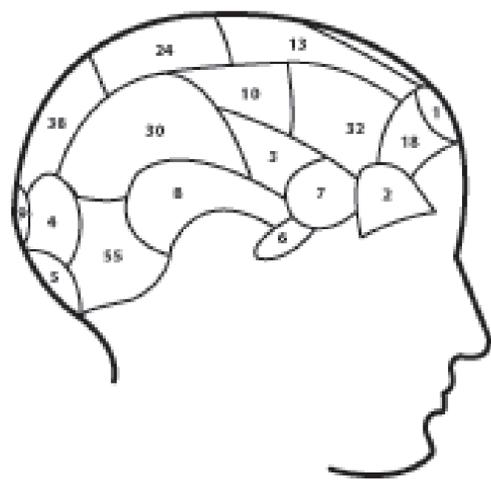


based on a failure expunges negative tendencies from your personality.

I imagine there are people who are absolutely paralyzed by their fear of failure that they hardly live — which could be viewed as a failure in and of itself. Not taking risks creates a sterile lifestyle, one of excessive order and boredom. The risky

route might seem more intimidating and pockmarked with potential trouble, but in the end it is much more rewarding.

So I challenge you — the next time failure strikes, face it bravely. Embody it, make a change and become a stronger person. Failures are really just missed successes anyway.



BY ELIZABETH NECKA
Columnist

My friend is a sex vixen, so much so that she should take out stock in Trojan or K-Y. She used to work in a sex-toy shop and could personally attest to each toy's potential for bedroom fun. She is a master in the art of multi-orgasms and could author her own Kama Sutra book. This woman loves sex.

Her sex life aside, she is a lovely, talented, intelligent and compassionate human being. Her sexual appetite does not discredit her as a person in the least. In fact, I argue that her comfort with accepting her whole self, sexuality included, makes her an even more respectable person. Despite this, I've overheard people addressing her as "slutty" or "a whore."

Women can enjoy sex, too. Unfortunately, society's double standard infiltrates the human psyche. Imagine the morning after a party: The man who hooked up was "lucky," but the woman was "easy." The parent of a teenage boy who finds a Playboy under his bed will chuckle. The parent of a teenage girl who finds Xtube in her browser history will scold. The

The Truman Experiment:

Women redefine sex

guy "needs to get laid," and my friend "needs to keep her pants on." Although the double standard is not as rigid as it once was, our socialization influences our psychological approach to sex. Women don't think they enjoy sex as much as their bodies indicate they do.

In a study by Meredith Chivers of Queen's University, men and women were instructed to watch a variety of sexual films, including clips of male-female copulation and bonobo (monkey) copulation and of same-sex copulation, masturbation and exercise in the nude. Subjects were attached to a device which recorded changes in penis circumference for men and vaginal blood flow for women. Results reveal that a lot more women are like my friend than act on the fact.

Chivers designed her study to determine with what specificity women respond to sexual stimuli. It is a well-researched claim that men respond with greater enthusiasm to the sexual stimuli that matches up best to their sexual orientation. For heterosexual men, the female-female film aroused them slightly more than the female-male film and much more than the male-male film. The opposite was true for homosexual men. For all men, copulation was more arousing than masturbation, which was more arousing than exercise. They were not aroused by monkeys.

Women, on the other hand, differ from men in their levels of arousal, according to vaginal flow patterns. Although differentiation based on the degree of sexual activity still exists (with copulation being much more effective than exercise), heterosexual women were nearly equally aroused by all sex, and homosexual women found female-female sex slightly more arousing than other sex. In addition, women showed physical excitement in response to the monkey sex, whereas men showed none. Although women aren't aroused by a person's sexiness, it seems they are quite easily turned on by any sexual activity. But we hide it.

We hide it not only physically, but also psychologically. Chivers stumbled upon an interesting result stark contrasts between female objective responses and their self-reported arousal. The

women self-reported trends similar to the men, with the most arousing porn corresponding with their sexual orientation. Women are either completely out of tune with their bodies, or they are afraid to admit their sexual urges. There might even be a social evolutionary process at hand: Women were restrained sexually for so long that perhaps today they are not even cognizant of the fact that they are turned on, because acknowledging sexual yearnings was maladaptive to survival.

There's another way to look at these results. Maybe evolution made women become aroused at all forms of sexual activity to protect herself from excessive physical pain in cases of rape or sexual assault. However, there must be an emotional component for women to become truly sexually aroused, something not present in Chivers' films. This theory would be in line with typical female sex patterns and partners, as compared to males'. Speaking as both a woman and a psychologist, for women, sex is more than just a physical behavior and is gratifying when it encompasses intimacy, trust, friendship and love.

Women are afraid of admitting the pleasure they get from raw sex because society deems them either virginal and pure or sexual and immoral, with no in-betweens. But women might not actually experience great pleasure outside of the context of an emotional interaction. I know women who have had both terrific and horrifying one-night-stands, and I know women who have had both amazing and awful sex with someone they loved deeply. Like most psychological theories, I'd venture to say that there's no hard and fast rule. Individual differences do exist, yet this research is pertinent in developing a broader understanding of female sexuality.

I appreciate all things sex-related, and I'm not afraid to admit it. But for me, I believe sexual activity would be most arousing in the context of a loving relationship. I'm curious how I would respond to Chivers' experiment.

To all of you female readers, lead your sex life in whatever manner makes you happy, despite what is "right" or "wrong." Embrace what your body tells you. Embrace your sexuality.

Sex with friends makes comeback

BY ANNE REBAR
Columnist

Relationships are getting complicated these days. There are so many varied degrees of dating that it's hard to keep track. Back in the day, it was easy: dating (or to go even farther back, courting), going steady, engagement and then marriage. Nice and simple.

Now, you can be anywhere from "talking," which is completely ambiguous and basically means, "I have no clue where this is going or what to call it, but I don't want to say we are dating and look like an idiot if he/she doesn't feel the same way," to "Facebook official," which has, whether you like to admit it or not, become somewhat of a relationship milestone. Even the lack of a label, essentially dating but proclaiming to all who ask, "Oh we aren't into labels," has basically become a label, in and of itself, despite any couple's objections.

However, in between all the millions of new degrees of romantic relationships, one has become increasingly prevalent among college-aged adults: friends with benefits (FWB).

For those who have been living under a rock, a friend with benefits is simply a friend whom you occasionally (or maybe frequently) have sex or fool around with, thus having extra benefits.

Understandably, some might oppose the idea of sex or other "recreational activities" outside of marriage or a long-term relationship, but whether they find it morally objectionable or just not their idea of fun, the fact is people are doing it (no pun intended).

Recent studies have shown that more than half of college-aged students have had an FWB. One study, conducted by research-

ers from Wayne State University (Mich.) and Michigan State University, found that out of 125 college students, 60 percent had been a part of an FWB relationship. Another study, published in the College Student Journal found that out of more than 1,000 students, 51 percent have had an FWB.

For those who aren't opposed to the idea, the question remains: Can an FWB arrangement work?

The study conducted by Michigan and Wayne State researchers, published in 2009 in Archives of Sexual Behavior by Melissa Bisson and Timothy Levine, found that of those who said they had experienced an FWB, 81 percent were optimistic of the possibility of being happy in that arrangement.

Participants went on to list the advantages and disadvantages of having an FWB. The most listed advantages were "no commitment" (59.7 percent), having an available sex-partner (55.6 percent) and having that partner be someone you know, like and trust (21 percent).

Basically, an FWB relationship, for many, can be a convenient way to satiate raging hormones without the commitment and occasionally exhausting legwork that is involved in a relationship. Having an FWB you know and trust can be better than the casual fling or one night stand. You know you like them and are hopefully physically attracted to them. You can call them instead of relying on your possibly impaired judgment at 1 a.m., and you trust them to be clean and use protection, contraceptives, etc., which is obviously a must. The relationship not only can help you avoid the regrettable situation of waking up next to a Shrek look-a-like, but many see it as a relatively safer way — as opposed to the random hook-up — to engage in recreational sexual activity. Provid-



ed, of course, the aforementioned necessities are used and that an FWB is what both parties are looking for.

Although this situation might seem ideal to some, it also has drawbacks. The most commonly cited disadvantages in Bisson and Levine's study were the development of feelings by one party (65.3 percent), harmful effects to the friendship (28.2 percent) and negative emotions arising (someone feels "used" or ashamed), cited by 27.4 percent.

It can be extremely difficult to separate sex from emotions, although men seem to have a much easier time separating the two than women. Women, thanks to a wonderful hormone called oxytocin, which is released during sexual activity and makes them feel more attached to their partners, might have a harder time keeping feelings platonic. The study, "Participants in 'friends with benefits' relationships", published in 2008 in The College Journal by Jennifer Puentes and her colleagues, showed that out of those who had been an FWB, 63.7 percent were male and only 50.2 percent were female. In Bisson and Levine's study of the 81 percent who thought FWB could work out favorably, 34 percent were men and 26 percent were women.

I'm all for the FWB as long as both parties have a mutual understanding of what the "beneficial friendship" entails. If one party enters into the situation disillusioned with the romantic idea that it might lead to love and happily ever after, he/she probably will end up hurt. According to Bisson and Levine's study, only 10 percent of FWB relationships progress to a romantic relationship.

Also, while I understand how negative emotions might arise out of the situation, anyone feeling used in an FWB relationship does not understand the concept. When you think about it, isn't that kind of the point? You both are using each other for the physical aspects of a relationship without all the complicated stuff. If you didn't realize that before you got in, well, I don't know what to tell you.

As for negative effects on the friendship, although 36 percent continued their friendship even after the sexual activity ceased, 26 percent said both the benefits and the friendship fizzled out. Risking a one in four chance of losing a close friend to an awkward sexual encounter probably isn't worth it, so be careful about who you make an FWB.