

Failure-tolerant leaders use the experience as a positive tool that invigorates employees

Being willing and able to fail is a leadership skill.

After all, responding to failure well is how we encourage more of an experimentation mindset, which is essential for innovation.

Let's look at a couple characteristics of leaders who fail well, then dive into helping others reframe how they view their hurdles.

Richard Farson and Ralph Keys in their book *The Failure-Tolerant Leader* share, "During his years leading Monsanto, Robert Shapiro was struck by how terrified his employees were of failing. They had been trained to see an unsuccessful product or project as a personal rebuke."

Shapiro tried hard to change that perception. He explained every product and project was an experiment and that its backers failed only if

their work was a halfhearted, careless effort with poor results.

Shapiro and other failure-tolerant leaders employ a number of strategies. Here are two.

Distinguish between excusable and inexcusable failure. Employees must know that failure is okay, but sloppy work will not be tolerated. A failure-tolerant leader is vigilant in examining what happened and why, and can tell the difference between a cavalier attempt that failed and a sincerely executed attempt that missed the mark.

Engage the person, not the project. Failure-tolerant leaders show a genuine interest in employees' growth and not just the status of the project. They send the message that learning

and development are just as important as project success.

When engaging people, the failure-tolerant leader shows interest and expresses support by asking pertinent questions. Opening questions may include: What kinds of challenges are you facing? What might be the next steps we are looking at as a company? The conversations that develop focus on the learning taking place.

Sometimes, however, the answers we get may indicate a colleague or employee has

negative thoughts. Here is where a good leader steps in to reframe the situation.

Reframing

Reframing is a questioning tool used in conflict resolution to re-word or re-state what someone has said more constructively.

Reframing validates the speaker's experience, then move from his or her perspective to a potentially more constructive one.

Original statement: Don't you know any better than to submit a proposal that will never fly?

Reframed statement: You may have a point there. How would you improve the proposal to make it fly?

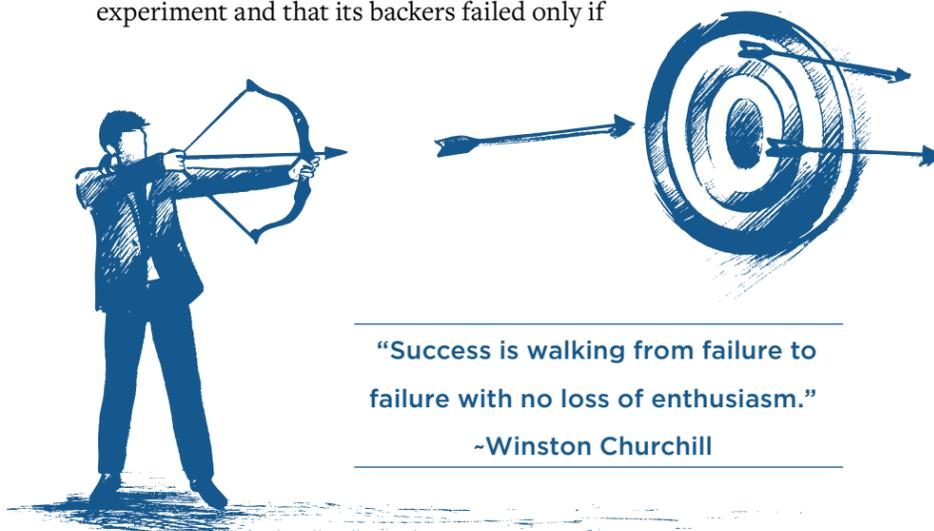
Techniques of reframing can be used to cultivate creative and critical thinking skills.

Original statement: I've never been good at public presentations.

Reframed statement: If you imagine yourself as successful at a public presentation, how would you be speaking that would make it successful?"

To succeed and to thrive, we have to be willing and able to step from failure to failure and not give up. We have to be willing and able to hear the tough feedback and duly note how we've messed up, what we overlooked, what failed, and make the necessary adjustments and keep moving forward.

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"Success is walking from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm."

-Winston Churchill

Flexing your style

Exploring personality differences with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment

The coronavirus situation forced us to spend time with people at home and online in new ways – and differences in personality wear thin when we are trying to cope with everyday life, let alone pandemic-level struggles.

But, interpersonal differences can be explained and quantified, and they give us insights into how to work with others. One excellent tool is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The assessment uses word pairs and phrases to identify ways people prefer to interact with each other and the world around them. MBTI shows our preferences, or patterns of behavior, across four either/or scales that cover much of our daily behavior.

Extraversion or Introversion

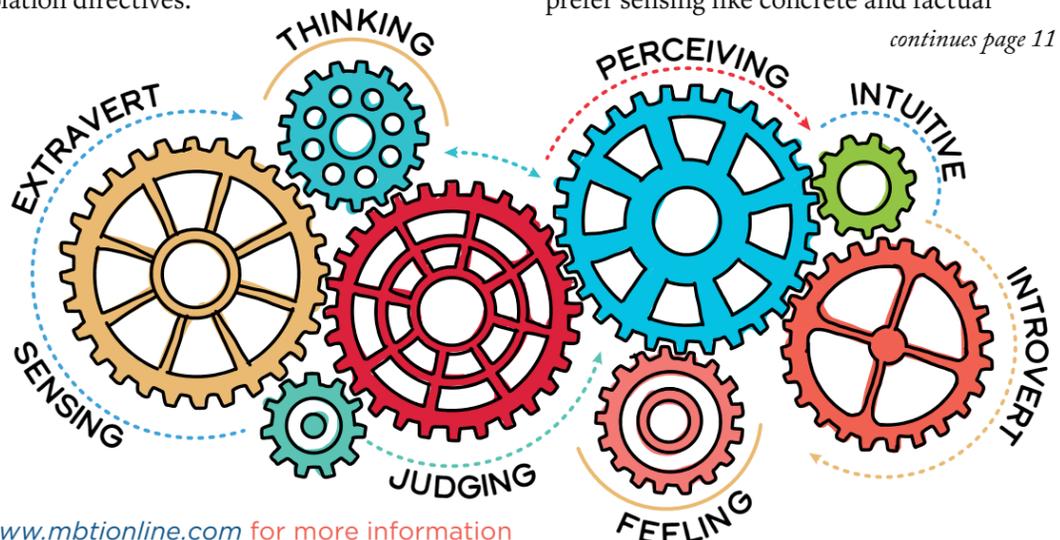
Perhaps the most familiar of all Myers-Briggs dichotomies, the Extraversion-Introversion pairing is about where you prefer to focus your attention. Extraverts tend to focus on the

outer world of people and activity. Interacting with others and talking aloud typically gives extraverts energy. Introverts typically get energy from self-reflection and appreciate time alone to recharge – they probably enjoyed the recent self-isolation directives.

Sensing or Intuitive

The next dichotomy revolves around information gathering. Sensing and Intuitive types have different preferences for the kind of information they like and trust. People who prefer sensing like concrete and factual

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Visit www.mbtionline.com for more information about the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.