

THE ROLE MODELS PROJECT

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT...?

FAILURE

**TEACHER
RESOURCES**

WHAT IS THE ROLE MODELS PROJECT?

What do we wish we'd known when we were younger?

Role Models is a peer-led mentoring project. A team of students who are currently studying or recently completed Higher Education courses in Sussex were asked to consider a series of issues particularly relevant to young adults. Starting with the question 'What do we wish we'd known when we were younger?' the team have written articles and made videos in response to these issues specifically designed for secondary school students in Years 10 to 13. The project aims to offer this age group ideas, tips, advice and encouragement from the authentic voices of those with recent experience of the issues discussed.

WHAT'S IN THE BOOKLET?

The Role Models team were asked to consider their relationship with failure. They discussed the shame associated with failure, the role of failure as a motivator and their approaches to dealing with failure in their own lives.

Each article in this booklet offers a personal perspective from one of the team based on their own experiences. They also offer tips and tasks to help students explore feelings around failure and ways forward.

By offering a number of different approaches to the issue, we hope your students will recognise a voice with which they connect.

At the end of the booklet the team have also collated further information and support on the topic.

How do I use this booklet with my group?

The booklet has been designed to be used either in a classroom setting or by students working from home.

For students working in school:

The teacher-led lesson activities included here explore the booklet and the themes that arise in the articles. You might choose to use each theme as a lesson plan or select individual activities, depending on time and suitability for your class. The different approaches discussed in each article can be used as a way of stimulating discussion and debate.

Alternatively, students can work through the booklet individually, or in small groups. They might be asked to read each article and then select a few different tasks to complete in school or at home, depending on the time and resources available.

WHAT'S IN THE BOOKLET?

For students working at home:

This booklet is made up of a number of different articles about the topic. Each article is accompanied by a task. The tasks vary in form and in the amount of time required to complete them.

Most tasks can be completed at home without teacher support and only need basic equipment. All have been designed to be accessible.

The basic requirements of each task and the minimum time needed to complete the tasks are clearly labelled. The ideas suggested can be explored in more detail and expanded or used as a starting point for your students to respond in their own way.

Some responses can be recorded in the booklet itself. For some creative tasks, you might ask students to send photographs of their ideas or work to you.

You might ask students to attempt every task in the booklet. Or you could ask them to select a couple of different tasks in different styles that best reflect their own thinking on the topic or require a range of skills and effort.

However you decide to use this resource, please encourage your students to watch the short video that accompanies the booklet first.

The video introduces the team behind the booklet and the style of the project overall, as well as offering some of their initial thoughts about failure. By 'meeting' the young people behind the articles first, we hope your students can get to know the team a little and connect to the ideas and advice they offer in the booklet.

Video Link:

<https://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/lisetoolkits/Role-Models-Resource-Books>

This project is funded by



TEACHER-LED LESSON ACTIVITIES

THEME: MANAGING FAILURE

Teacher
notes/
timings

Whole group

Read

The first page of the booklet where the Role Models project is explained.

Key points:

- The Role Models team is made up of a group of HE students from across Sussex.
- They were asked to consider what they wished they'd known when they were younger.
- They discussed issues surrounding feelings of failure, such as the shame associated with failure, the pressures they experienced to succeed, the role of failure as a motivator and their approaches to dealing with failure in their own lives.
- In response to these discussions they wrote the articles in the booklet and made videos.

Watch

Role Models Video that accompanies this booklet:

<https://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/lisetoolkits/Role-Models-Resource-Books>

Whole group

Discuss

In general terms:

- What does failure feel like?
- Who decides when you have failed at something?
- What is the worst thing about failing?

Small groups

Discuss and make a list

Make a list of all the things someone might fail at in an average year.

For example:

- Missing a deadline
- School exam
- Driving test
- Job interview
- Relationship
- Part in a play
- Place on a team

Whole group

Discuss and consider

Feedback each group's ideas and add them to a master list on the board.

Do all examples on the list count as 'failures' to everyone?

Which would be the worst to fail and why?

Does everyone experience failure in the same way?

Failure is a very common part of every one's life, so why is so difficult to discuss?

Whole group	Read/Discuss Ani's article on page 3. Ani says: <i>'Failing at any time in our lives is soul crushing. I understand that feeling when you've pursued a passion so immensely that ends up not working out – it's painful.'</i> Failure can be particularly difficult because it triggers a lot of different feelings. As a class, make a list of the emotions we might feel after we have failed something.	Teacher notes/ timings
Individually	Consider How do you respond to failure? Think about a time when you were younger and you failed something. • Select an example that doesn't feel painful to discuss with someone else – maybe something from primary school or when you were a young child.	
In pairs	Discuss Take it in turns to discuss the following questions with your partner in relation to this 'failure'. • Why was it important to you at the time to succeed at this thing? • How did you react at the time to this 'failure'? • Looking back now, what were the long-term consequences of this failure? • In hindsight, would you still consider this event as a failure? (It's fine if you do!) • If so, how important was that event in your journey to where and who you are now?	
Individually	Consider/Write Ani says: <i>'I ended up achieving my goal of getting to university when I was 19. It wasn't the 'normal' path everyone else took – but it was my journey.'</i> We are often the most disappointed by failure when we expect a different outcome, or we think we have fallen short of the expectations of others. Thinking about your life now, what expectations do you have about your future? • Where do you expect to be and what do you expect to be doing – In 3 years – In 5 years? – In 10 years? • What might be the main reasons you wouldn't end up where you expect to be? • Which of those reasons are in your control? For example, you might get an interview for your dream job, but the interview panel choose someone else. How much of that process is in your control? Feedback your idea to the group.	

Whole Group**Discuss**

Where have the expectations you have about your future come from?

- You? Your family?
- Your friends? Your school?
- Your community? Wider society?

How would others react if, like Ani, you ended up on a different journey than you'd planned?

**Teacher
notes/
timings**

Whole Group**Read/Discuss**

Imogen's article on page 5.

Imogen says:

'The funny thing about failing is that the idea is usually scarier than actually failing itself. Isn't that crazy? How many times have you stopped yourself doing something because of the fear that you might fail at it? I know I have – endless amounts of times.'

What has fear of failure stopped you from trying?

In Pairs**Discuss/Write**

With your partner, create the following table:

Activity/ experience you'd like to try	Worse case scenario	Best case scenario	Likely scenario

Discuss things you would like to try but haven't because of fear of failure.

- Consider the absolutely worse thing that could happen if you tried it.
- Consider the absolutely best thing that could happen if you tried it.
- Now consider what the most realistic outcome of trying this thing would be.

Here's an example inspired by Imogen's experience:

Activity/ experience you'd like to try	Worse case scenario	Best case scenario	Likely scenario
Auditioning for a play with a local theatre group.	The panel stop me mid audition, burst out laughing and send me away. Then they post my audition on YouTube for everyone to laugh at and comment on.	The panel stop me mid audition, tell me I'm the best actor they have ever seen and give me the star part.	I get a small part because it's the first time I've acted outside of school, so need to build up my experience (and therefore I haven't failed if I don't get an amazing part straight away).

Whole group	Discuss Feed back some of your examples to the group Consider times when you feel you have failed in your life. • Were your expectations always realistic? • How might you manage your expectations before trying a new experience?	Teacher notes/timings
Drama Extension activity	Act out some of the 'best case/worse case/likely case' scenarios and turn them into scenes.	
Extension activity	Complete Ani's 'Rational And Irrational Thoughts' exercise on page 4.	
Extension activity	Complete Imogen's 'Everything Happens For A Reason' exercise on page 6.	

THEME: THE POSITIVES OF FAILING

Whole group	Discuss Some of the Role Models team talk about failure as a positive thing that can motivate them to do better next time. This approach seems to be particularly common in business and sport. • Do you think failure can be a positive experience? • Have you ever found positive outcomes or motivation from failing something?	Teacher notes/ timings
Whole group	Read Nick's article on page 9.	
Whole group	Discuss Nick discusses the importance of resilience when considering how we deal with failure. But being resilient when you feel like you have failed is often easier said than done. • What does the word 'resilience' mean to you? • Can you become more resilient or do some people seem to have more resilience than others?	
In Pairs	Discuss Nick says: <i>'I urge us to never give up or be put off by failure if it is something we truly want or believe in. ...It's our mistakes and failures that we truly learn from and that make us stronger. Never be afraid to fail!'</i> Discuss with your partner an example from your own life where you showed resilience and didn't give up. • Why did you not give up on this occasion? • What did you learn from the experience? Consider • Resilience is needed in everyday tasks as well as in more challenging experiences where you are put to the test. • Your example could be taken from everyday life – like learning a new skill. Or it could be an example of facing something significant that really challenged you. Share some examples with the whole class.	
Whole group	Read Ally's article on page 7.	
Whole group	Discuss Ally says: <i>'When I would fail any task, however big or small... I was really hard on myself. I'd actually get to the point of feeling worthless and stupid... I focused so much on the negativity that surrounds the word 'failure' that I didn't get to see the true beauty behind it.'</i> Ally suggests they could not see any positives after failing at something because they were too focused on the negative feelings towards themselves. • How can you flip feelings of failure into a positive experience? • What do you need to do for yourself to get to the point that you can see it as positive? Feed back ideas to the whole group.	

Small groups

Discuss/Research/Take notes

Ally says:

'Failure is supposed to happen in order to make you stronger. The most important thing to remember is you will never fail anybody but yourself, and even if you've failed yourself, it's just a sign for you to push through.'

There are many examples of 'famous failures': successful people who only became successful after failure.

Looks at the examples discussed in the article **'29 People Who Failed Before They Succeeded'** (The Independent 2017).
(Link to full article below. Or use the four examples given if you want to keep it simple).

- In your groups, discuss what these examples appear to have in common.
- After your initial discussion, each person in the group should take one of the examples and use it as a case study of someone who turned failure into success.
- Research/make notes about the person's experiences with failure and success.
- Look for interviews or quotes about their life and their journey to success.

Consider

- Is the story of failure and success as simple as it seems?
- Are these people successful purely because they did not give up?
- What other factors might have helped them overcome failure and succeed?

Article link:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/success-29-famous-people-failed-jay-z-oprah-winfrey-steven-spielberg-isaac-newton-charles-darwin-winston-churchill-a7892406.html>

Examples from the article:

'Carey Mulligan was rejected from every single drama school she applied to... "They were like, go home!" ...She has gone on to starring roles on Broadway and in Hollywood'. And she was nominated for an Oscar in 2021.'

'Thomas Edison's teachers told him he was "too stupid to learn anything". After that, things stayed bleak for a while, as Edison went on to be fired from his first two jobs, for not being suitably productive. Edison went on to hold more than 1,000 patents and invented some world-changing devices, like the phonograph, practical electrical lamp, and a movie camera.'

'A young Jay-Z couldn't get any record label to sign him. Growing up in the Marcy Projects in Brooklyn, Jay-Z worked to perfect his flow, his lyrics, and his references. When he couldn't get a single bite on his first CD, he and his friends sold the record "out of the boot of their car next to Gray's Papaya." Now, the musician — who's also an investor and entrepreneur — is worth \$550 million, according to Forbes.'

Teacher
notes/
timings

Internet/
library
Access

'Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, had his first book rejected by 27 different publishers. Dr. Seuss became a legendary children's author known around the world for classics like *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham*. His books have sold over 600 million copies.'

Feed back your research to your group.

- As a group create a list of five 'rules' to turn a failure into a success based on your research.
- Try and include quotes from your case studies.

Feed back your group's rules to the rest of the class.

**Extension
Activity**

Complete Ally's 'Then And Now Mind Map' exercise on page 8.

**Extension
Activity**

Complete Nick's 'Back To Basics' exercise on page 10.

THEME: CAN WE ALWAYS SUCCEED?

Whole group	Read Lola's article on page 11.	Teacher notes/ timings
Whole group	Discuss Lola discusses the following reasons we might fail: • 'A reluctance to try new things or get involved in challenging projects. • Self-sabotage – for example, procrastination, excessive anxiety, or a failure to follow through with goals. • Low self-esteem or self-confidence – commonly using negative statements such as 'I'll never be good enough to get that promotion' or 'I'm not smart enough to get on that team'. • Perfectionism – A willingness to try only those things that you know you'll finish perfectly and successfully.' Source: Mindtools.com Why do you think you fail? • Do you recognise yourself in any of those descriptions? • Think about times you have failed. Did any of the following play a part? - Lack of knowledge - Lack of effort - Lack of confidence - Wrong technique - Wrong attitude	
Individuality	Consider/Make notes Lola says: <i>'One of the greatest strengths a person can have is being comfortable with the concept of being uncomfortable. Going out of your comfort zone and tackling any fear is like stretching and working out a muscle. The more you do it, the stronger and easier it'll become.'</i> Lola believes in confronting the fear of failure head on and getting used to it. If you imagine the best version of yourself, how would that version of you deal failure? • 'Write your ideas on post-it notes and share them with the group to create a display you can turn to when you are struggling to overcome feelings of failure.	Post-it notes
Whole group	Read Emily's article on page 13. Discuss Emily offers a quote sometimes attributed to Albert Einstein: <i>'Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.'</i> When is it ok to fail? Do we all have to succeed at everything?	

Two teams	Research In two teams prepare to debate the following statement: 'Anyone can succeed at anything – if they are willing to work for it.' Take a vote on the statement before you form groups. You may have to argue against your current opinion but keep open-minded and see what you can find out. • Team A will argue FOR THE STATEMENT • Team B will argue AGAINST THE STATEMENT Each team must present at least two arguments to support their position. Each argument must be backed up with: • Case studies and researched examples. • Quotes and sources.	Teacher notes /timings Internet Access
Whole group	Debate Once you have formed your arguments and gathered supportive research, debate the statement, 'Any one can succeed at anything – if they are willing to work for it.' • Set clear rules about listening to the opinions presented and respecting the position each person takes. At the end of the debate, vote again on the statement. • Have any opinions changed? • What was the most persuasive argument made and why? Consider again: Do we all have to succeed at everything?	
Extension activity	Complete Lola's 'SUPER YOU' Task on page 12.	
Extension activity	Complete Emily's 'Successes And Failures' task on page 14.	
Extension activity	Film Making Watch the Role Models video that accompanies this booklet. https://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/lisetoolkits/Role-Models-Resource-Books Make your own video clip offering practical advice about dealing with failure.	

This resource was created in 2021.

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For more information about the Role Models projects including links to our Role Models films and other topic booklets visit

<https://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/lisetoolkits/Role-Models-Resource-Books>

Thanks for supporting the Role Models Project.