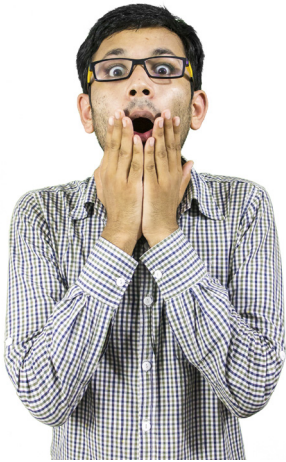


Learn How To Fail & Succeed



Engineering students at Northwestern University (Illinois) are required to pass a course to solve the unsolvable — that is, told to solve a problem with no known solution. The course is called Design, Thinking, and Communication. Why is this type of course required for students by Northwestern and other colleges?

First, colleges know that students may arrive on campus without the skills needed to turn failure into success. In high school, students may have graduated without failing one course. **But graduates will find** ups (successes) and downs (failures) in their careers. **Second, high school teachers assign** projects with clear goals and pathway to reach the desired grade. **In the work world,** there may be no clear pathway to reach a goal and no standards for a grade. **Third, a student trying for perfect answers** may experience stress, anxiety, and depression. In a career, a worker's job suffers when the worker feels stress, anxiety, and depression. **Therefore, colleges decided that it is their duty to teach students:** 1) How to turn failure into success. 2) How to deal with unclear goals and pathways. 3) How to stay positive in a job by steps towards "better" rather than leap to "perfect."

Design, Thinking, and Communication class requires these things:

1) Students must work in teams of four. 2) Students are given a budget of \$100. 3) Students must design and build devices to help disable persons with a task. 4) The tasks have no known solution yet. **Assigned tasks may include:** a) Equip stroke victim who has lost most use of one hand with method or device to be able to knit. b) Make a bottle opener for people with only one arm. c) Make something to allow a partially paralyzed person to put on socks. d) Create a walker for a patient that glides over different surfaces, is stable, and has shock absorbers to cushion person's arms and shoulders when leaning on the walker. Students drive to senior homes to meet with disabled patients, get to know about the disabilities, and think of solutions. Students are not graded on the success of solution. Students are graded on how well they: 1) work with patients; 2) communicate; 3) work as a team; 4) think of possible solutions; 5) create method or device for patients to try; 6) accept patients' good and bad feedback after trying solution; 7) how well students present their project at course end.

!IDEA

Here are the skills students learn by tackling problems without solutions. In addition, these skills help workers turn career failure into career success:

STRATEGY (WHAT YOU DO)

Listen to and understand people, their personalities, their needs
Be open to new and different ways of thinking
Get help from others and give help to others
Try many ideas, even strange-sounding ones
Adopt an entrepreneurial (business owner) attitude
Accept failures that will always happen, with a polite attitude
If you do not succeed, bounce back to try and try and try again

SKILL (WHAT YOU LEARN)

EMPATHY
CREATIVITY
TEAMWORK
BRAINSTORMING
RISK-TAKING
HUMILITY
RESILIENCY



In addition, self-talk (way a person thinks) may cause failure or success. Athletes know that positive self-talk can improve their game performance. Winning athletes learn how to change negative self-talk into positive self-talk. Negative self-talk is a habit learned in childhood and must be broken.



The way to break a habit is to smash it and immediately replace it with something better. For example, if you say, "I can never do that," immediately tell yourself, "I can do it this way" or "I will find a way." Some athletes are told to wear a rubber band around the wrist, then whenever they think a self-harmful thought: 1) pull the rubber band; 2) let it snap on the wrist; 3) then think a positive thought to replace the negative thought. For example, "I am a loser" — SNAP — "Not everyone has a home run record like Babe Ruth. I will practice more," or "I am ugly" — SNAP — "I will eat right and exercise to improve myself."

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

Nothing goes right for me.
I should never have . . .
No one ever bothers to talk to me.
I'm no good at anything.
What's the use?
What if I fail?
It's too much or too complicated for me.



TURNED INTO POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Overcoming problems makes me stronger. I can get it right.
Next time, I will . . .
I will say "Hi" to people and talk to them first.
I'm good at . . .
I won't let this stop me. Things can get better.
Many good people fail, then try again, and succeed.
I'll break it down into parts and tackle each part successfully.



Examples of people who failed before success: Henry Ford (went broke 5 times before starting Ford Motor Company). Oprah Winfrey (fired from first TV job for getting too emotionally involved in her stories). Akio Morita (rice cooker business failed before starting Sony). Solchiro Honda (turned down for a job by Toyota before starting Honda). Harland Sanders (chicken recipe rejected 1,009 times before a restaurant accepted it). Walt Disney (fired by a newspaper editor because he lacked imagination and had no good ideas). Theodore Seuss Geisel or Dr. Seuss (first book rejected by 27 publishers).

QUICK CHECK:

1. a) What are students at Northwestern University required to pass? b) What is the course called?
2. a) What do colleges know? b) In high school what may students have graduated without? c) What will graduates find in their careers?
3. a) What do high school teachers assign? b) What may happen in the work world?
4. a) What may a student striving for perfect answers experience? b) What happens when a worker feels these 3 things?
5. a) List 3 things some colleges decided that it is their duty to teach students. b) Do you think colleges need to teach these 3 things? c) Give a reason for your opinion.
6. a) List 4 things required in the Design, Thinking, and Communication class. b) Give 2 examples of assigned tasks.
7. On what 7 things are students graded?
8. What strategy help students learn: a) Empathy? b) Creativity? c) Teamwork? d) Brainstorming? e) Risk-taking? f) Humility? g) Resiliency?
9. a) Define "self-talk." b) What do athletes know about positive self-talk?
10. a) What is a habit? b) When is it learned? c) What is the way to break a habit? d) Give one example.
11. When told to wear a rubber band around the wrist, what 3 things are athletes to do whenever they think a self-harmful thought?
12. Give 3 examples of negative self-talk turned into positive self-talk.
13. How did the these people fail before success: a) Winfrey. b) Honda. c) Sanders. d) Disney.
14. a) Do you think it is important for you to learn how to fail? b) Give a reason for your answer.