

Ep #52: Productive Vs. Unproductive Failure



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Stacey Boehman

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Welcome to the *Make Money as a Life Coach*® podcast where sales expert and master coach Stacey Boehman teaches you how to make your first 2K, 20K, and 200K using her proven formula.

Hello life coaches, welcome to episode 52. It's a beautiful day to be life coaching. My client and friend Lindsey used to say, "It's a beautiful day to save lives." I think it was her that used to say that. It is a beautiful day to save some lives, coach some people up.

So I'm excited to chat with you today. A lot of people ask me what my process is for podcasting and one of the things I will say is I am a pretty consistent podcaster, so I have a schedule. Over the past year, I have learned to stick to it. And I can pretty much create a podcast on demand.

So it gets written, it gets recorded in about 90 minutes. Sometimes a little bit longer, sometimes I spend a whole week jotting down ideas, but for the most part, it gets written and it gets recorded in about 90 minutes without tech issues or things like that.

So that process feels like I'm creating the podcast, but every once in a while, it feels like the podcast created me a little bit. Like, created this situation. Like the podcast itself came out of me and did the dictating. I don't know if that makes sense, but instead of me intentionally creating, it's like it created itself in my mind and just started coming out of me.

I never not take advantage of that. I just feel like it's free creativity that the world offers you and I'm like, let's do it. So it's like, almost seven o'clock at night. It's two days before Thanksgiving. We're getting up early in the morning and heading to visit our first of many family visits.

And I'm sitting here with you. I'm excited about Thanksgiving, I'm excited that Christmas is coming up, I'm excited about Black Friday shopping, and I'm excited to record this podcast with you that basically just poured out of my fingertips.

Alright, so let's dive in. This is what we're going to talk about today. Productive versus unproductive failure. As entrepreneurs, we fail a lot. It's our job to fail. Actually, you know the reason this might have come out of

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me is I feel like I just had to do a really hard thing today and it feels like it was avoidable.

I was talking to my coach about it like I could have prevented it if I had made a better decision ahead of time, like, weeks and weeks ago, and at the time I think I even knew the decision. I always teach this in my 200K students. As soon as you know the decision, you have to take action on it, and I didn't.

And our brains play tricks on us. They tell us all the good reasons why we're not taking action on it and I didn't see it and I didn't take action on it. And so I think the reason this poured out of my fingertips is really because I'm sitting in the aftereffects of having failed, and knowing that it could have been prevented and then it just started making me think about failure.

But one of the interesting things that happened before this kind of poured out of me is although I know I could have prevented it, and although I wish I had prevented it, I'm also not beating myself up that I didn't. I'm just kind of like, yeah, see that one, okay. And I'm really learning from it and I'm not turning it into this big thing.

In fact, I've had very little drama over it. It's kind of like I'm not shaming myself on top of the failure. I'm just like, oh yeah, this was definitely a fail. And so I'm experiencing it so differently, and it really does make me think about the way that we experience it.

So we fail a lot as entrepreneurs, and we think as soon as we start making money that the failing will go away or that it will be less than. And I think the more money you make, the more you actually fail. Now, not to freak you out and scare you. I will say, also the more money you make, the better you get at failure theoretically.

Because you have to fail to succeed, so the more that you succeed, the more you have failed, the more comfort you have found in the discomfort of failure, so you tend to just handle it a little bit better. But it does happen, and so I just had this kind of like, moment of realizing that it happened and

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kind of being aware and noticing the way I was handling it and feeling very proud about it.

So I wanted to talk to you guys about failure today and I was thinking about there being two types of failure, and for me, I'm going to talk about productive and unproductive failure, but this failure that I had feels like a productive failure in that I'm already learning from it.

So before we dive into that, I just want to say, our job is to fail. My coach is always saying that every successful entrepreneur is just standing on a pile of failures and I love thinking of it that way. That's true. It's like, if you're at the top of the mountain, everything below you, it's like a stack of failures. That's actually what's holding you up.

So I want you to think about this idea that failure really is the path to success. It's necessary. You figure out what works by figuring out what doesn't. Even as babies. We learn to walk by falling down. Babies literally strengthen their muscles in their legs by getting back up, which is then how they grow strong enough to walk. That is the exact way entrepreneurship happens.

And it's really important to know that it is impossible to succeed without failing. So I want you to really - I'm going to say that again but I want you to really hear it from me. It is impossible to succeed without failing. In fact, I would even say it's impossible to make a ton of money and run a business without experiencing failure often. That is just part of it.

We sometimes think we're getting to that land of rainbows and daisies and butterflies, but we're not. And to really even think about there has never been an instance in history where a baby learned to walk without ever falling down. Every baby in history learned to walk by falling down a lot.

So making money is exactly like learning how to walk. We fail first. We fall down repeatedly. Then if we learn from our failure and we do not ever quit learning from our failure, we succeed. For some of you, this may be the first time you're ever thinking of failure this way and hearing it this way. And for many of you, you might be like, "Yeah. I know. I've heard this before."

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But I coach coaches. We all theoretically, logically know all of this stuff. All day long. We're like, yeah, got it, I know this, I know that. But it is the one thing that I see all day long when I'm in my 2K program and my 200K program is that we don't actually know it. Even myself. We know it logically but sometimes we're forget, or in the moment we're not paying attention to it or we don't have awareness over it.

When I look at all of the coaches' businesses that I coach, like when I look at all their problems and the money that they want to make versus the money they're making now, I know 100% they would all be further along if they did just this. Learn from every failure, keep going no matter what until they succeed.

And I do think the successful coaches that have gotten where they are have gotten there because we, myself included, have mastered in a sense, the failing, learning, and never quitting cycle. Like today, when I failed, I realized that awareness of the way I was handling it is drastically different than the way I used to handle it. I might have shamed myself for weeks.

Even this year, I've learned so much about not taking anything that happens with contractors, employees, all of that, when things don't go my way with other people, not even taking that personally. Even if it ends up in a big fail in business, not making that mean something about the person or myself or anything like that.

So there are two types of failure. That's what we're going to talk about today. And the cycle of taking action, learning from every failure, keeping going no matter what until you succeed, that cycle is one type of failure that I call productive failure.

So productive failure is taking action without knowing the correct action. Without knowing the how and failing, and then learning, and then taking more action and then failing and then learning. That cycle will produce for you. It will produce results.

It will produce something. Like a knowledge, skill, money, time, better relationships, weight loss. It either produces a tangible very specific result

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or it will produce growth in the form of more knowledge or a higher-level skill. Even if it's just slightly better than yesterday. It produces more than what you have now.

Even if it's just the knowledge of just all the ways it doesn't work. This is the failure that happens when you're learning and you're trying new things and then learning more. That's productive. And it's really important to know that productive failure only happens through application, through taking action. It's failure from doing.

I always say, it isn't enough to get coaching or coach yourself. You have to go apply that coaching, which is just a fancy for you have to go out and do something new with that coaching you just got. You have to go do something. You have to take action that will produce a result and then you get to learn from that result.

In 2K for 2K, I have you do an evaluation process for the consults that you do. This helps you productively fail, that evaluating, that learning from the doing. It doesn't matter how much I teach you about consults. How many questions you ask me about them, how many modules you watch, if you read the entire consultation code front to back.

If you don't go do consults, if you don't go fail on consults, if you don't figure out in real life what doesn't work, if you don't learn from what doesn't work, if you don't keep trying again and again, each time with new knowledge and new skill, you will never produce anything.

So productive failure produces results. You evaluate those results. That evaluation process is what creates success. So it's fair to say productive failure is the "how" to success. Be careful that you don't make productive failure mean that you aren't succeeding. That is what we do. We do the opposite. It means we're not succeeding, not doing the how of success.

Like everyone's always asking, how, how, how. It's failing. Failing is the how. But we turn around and make that mean it's actually the opposite. It means we're not doing it right and it means we're not succeeding. Just notice if that's what's you're doing.

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I remember last year, I was learning and productively failing at selling my 2K for 2K program, which by the way, oh my god. Feels like years ago. As I said that, I was like, wait a minute. I can't believe it was just last year. That doesn't make any sense.

Anyway, I remember at the time not knowing the difference between these types of failure, and sort of swimming in what felt like just general failure. And I think general failure is the thought, "I'm never going to get this." That's generalized failure.

When you have thoughts like I'm never going to get this, it feels like unproductive failure. We're going to talk about that in a second. But this was happening and I'm doing all these 2K launches and I'm figuring out how to sell it and how to market it and how to talk about it and write copy around it and how to execute it. I'm figuring it all out.

And I think I did six launches and we missed the mark. We sold, but it didn't hit the goal any of those times. And then at the end of the year we didn't hit the yearly goal. I didn't make a million dollars. So I would post for help in my mastermind group, and this one time that I posted about one of the launches, my coach Brooke responded to this long paragraph I wrote with three words. "Winning or learning."

Technically it almost feels like two words. Winning or learning. That's it. You are either succeeding or you're learning when it comes to productively failing. That's literally the only two things that happen when you productive fail. You win or you learn.

Remember, productive failure is taking action, evaluating, learning from that action. Because you could just take action all day long and if you never learn from it, that's still unproductive. We'll talk about unproductive in a second. But when you take action and learn from it, the only two results you'll end up with is winning or learning, which is so fantastic.

So I was productively failing. I productively failed for an entire year at making a million dollars. Now, here's what's very important. Listen up. I productively failed at my goal of making a million dollars for an entire year.

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And then I made a million dollars in six months. And we're at almost - we're at 2.5, 2.7 this year because I figured it out. I productively failed and I grew every single time I did.

Scaling was like learning to walk for me. Again, making your first dollars is you're learning to walk. And then going to multiple six figures, you're learning to walk again. And then going to seven figures is definitely feeling like learning to walk. And once I learned, I started walking everywhere.

And now actually, this time at the end of this year, I feel like I'm in a place where now I'm starting to run. And in the best way possible. But it's really just because of my response to failure and how frequently I am failing and how frequently I'm taking action and learning from what I am doing.

Whether it's micro fails or giant fails. They're not always giant fails. Sometimes they're just little micro fails. Like today, it didn't feel like a giant fail. It was definitely a small fail that maybe I could have even not even paid attention to. I just felt this one.

But now I feel like I understand this more than ever. And this year, I have spent so much less time being in drama about the productive fails so I've done so much more with that time that I was spending being in drama and so I've succeeded so much faster. That's why the financial return, it literally proves that.

And that's really the point here. When you become aware that you're productively failing, you can lessen your emotional reaction to it and you can get to failing faster and more frequently and then create more success even faster.

So now let's talk about unproductive failure. So unproductive failure is unproductive because it produces nothing. That's the key indicator. Unproductive failure is the failure that happens before you take action and when you don't take action.

So before you would go to take action, you have a fear response about how you imagine the productive failure will feel. So the taking of the action and not getting what you want will feel - you imagine what that will be like,

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and then you fail before you even take the action because you don't take the action out of the fear, which shows up in many different ways.

Lack of motivation. Everyone's like, "How do I get motivated?" Stop being afraid. How do I stop spinning in the how? Stop being afraid. How do I get out of all my drama? Stop being afraid.

What I mean by stop being afraid is just being willing to feel being afraid, but stop resisting it. When you do nothing, then you produce nothing. You got it. You guessed it before I said it. No learning happens. No skill is developed. No action is taken. No success is created.

And it's important to know that this is just you, your brain trying to avoid what you are making failure mean. And how that meaning you assign it will make you feel. You assign the meaning and then it makes you feel a certain way, but you're the one that assigned the meaning.

So this shows up for a lot of coaches in a really sneaky way, and I want to bring it to your attention because you might be like, at this point, oh no, I don't do that, I'm so beyond that. I always get coaches that will like, comment on my Instagram or in the 2K, "Oh yeah, I totally mastered this this year. I used to do that. Now I don't anymore ever."

And I always question that because all the stuff I teach you is all stuff that I still have to work on and be aware of because I have a human brain. So you might be listening to this being like, oh yeah, I used totally unproductively fail all the time and now I only productively fail. And I just want to encourage you, take a seat and listen. This could be you.

So this is a sneaky way it shows up. It shows up through the thought process of trying to create success without failure. This will show up where all of your decisions are focused on succeeding. This happens a lot around the six-figure mark. Where you start succeeding and then you start fearing failing again, or you start thinking that - I remember I used to think that now if I fail, it'll be a public fail, which grew even bigger beginning of my seven-figure year.

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I'm like, oh my gosh, people are going to see my fail. This even came up recently for me. Like oh, but it'll be such a public failure. So any time you think about the right actions to take, the right decision to make, to not experience the failure or to do it right the first time, to just succeed out of the gate, that will always make you unproductively fail.

Because you'll take less risks, you'll make less decisions, you'll do less things. And there's no way to know what's right or what will work without, very important, hindsight. Without retrospect. Without the awareness we gain after trying, after doing.

So you could stay stuck in figuring it out and trying to decide and never decide, which then causes you to fail and feel failure. The thing you are avoiding in the first place. And - and this is so important - without any of the gain of knowledge and experience.

So it's like you still feel it no matter what but you don't get the good stuff that would come along with just having taken action and productively fail. This will cost you lots of money and it will make you feel lots of failure for longer periods of time. You have to see this. It's so important.

And I also want you to think about this. Sometimes you do just succeed out of the gate. That happens. I have people join 2K all the time and they sign the first person they speak to and they freak out at how easy it is. Yes, it can be.

You can do a consult and just sign the first person. That can happen. A lot of things end up being that way. But think about this. When you aren't willing to fail, you also aren't willing to succeed. I'm going to say that one again too. When you aren't willing to fail, you also aren't willing to succeed.

You aren't able to succeed. You don't put yourself in the position to even get an easy win. We always imagine it's going to be this hard, toiling process. And sometimes it will be, just so you know, but not always. And the more willing you are to toil and to work it and work it some more, oftentimes, the easier and easier it gets because you approach whatever you're doing without resistance and with commitment.

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So today I want you to think about your last 20 fails. I want you to label what they were. What percentage of them was unproductive and what percentage was productive? You could even look at today. What was the percentage that you productively failed versus unproductively failed.

Which doesn't necessarily mean you took a bunch of action today. Did you take a bunch of action and learn from it? Or did you take a bunch of action and then just keep taking a bunch of action without learning from it? Or did you not take any action at all?

How much time did you spend avoiding or distracting yourself with action? How much time did you spend thinking about taking action? How much time did you spend coaching yourself in order to get into action? How much time did you spend doing things or sitting in the drama that weren't taking action and taking risks and putting yourself in the position to fail?

Because I think that will tell you exactly why you're making the amount of money you're making. You could do today, you could do this week, but I really suggest looking into that. What - and I think we lie to ourselves sometimes. That's why I think you want to get very specific. Maybe even track your time for an entire week.

How much time was actively spent in my business? Because a lot of y'all also say like, "I couldn't have more clients, there's no way I could do 20 clients. There's no way I could make 100K. I'm maxed out at 50." But how much of that time are you unproductively failing?

Another way if you're unsure about if you productively or unproductively failed this week is you could say what did I produce this week? What did I learn? What did I get even slightly better at? Or again, what was I not taking action and distracting myself from?

This is just going to give you such a great place to start and such awareness around this. Now, if you're really struggling with being stuck in unproductively failing, here is what you need to work on. Number one - there's three things.

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What you make it mean when you don't succeed x number of times. You insert that number. It's very interesting. Because some of y'all will be like, oh yeah, I'm willing to fail five times and then I lose my shit.

I have a client in 2K for 2K who I think failed 39 consults in a row. It was a while ago so I'm trying to remember the exact specifics. But it wasn't until like, the 40th consult that she started signing clients, that she started walking and actually, her walk quickly turned into a run because she ran all the way to 100K after that. But what changed for her was number two, committing to productive failure.

I asked her how many more times she was willing to fail to get it right for the rest of her career. So she just lost the resistance to failure, and that was the only thing holding her back. So she was making it mean all these awful things, that she was never going to succeed, it was all these awful things. She was making it mean that 39 times was so much different than seven times. Whatever.

So what you make it mean when you don't succeed x number of times, and then committing to failing infinite times until you make it succeed. That is the, I think, secret to my success 100% is I decided early on in my business, I will work at this for 10 years, doesn't matter however long it takes. I will get my coaching business off of the ground.

Now, I didn't approach that lackadaisically either. But I was just willing to do that. Like I knew there was no option for turning back. I used to tell myself that all the time. It's just not even an option. By the way, my mom used to say, so interesting, I realized that she used to say something that I hated when we were growing up and now I'm like, oh my god, I think that subconsciously seeped into me in the best way possible and it's the reason I'm so successful to this day.

She used to say, "No is not in my vocabulary." Exactly like that, by the way. For everything. No is not in my vocabulary. And I think that that's true for me. No is never in my vocabulary for many things. I get my way a lot because no is just not in my vocabulary and I also succeed a lot because no is not in my vocabulary. It's not available.

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Like no, no is not a word. It's not in my dictionary. So when you commit to 100% all in until you succeed, everything changes. Everything shifts. So that's number two.

Number three is your capacity to feel bad. That's what you have to change. If there's nothing you are willing to feel, like really willing, like I want you to imagine the worst emotion that you experience for yourself. Everybody has one that's like, the worst one for them. But imagine if you would just let that swirl around in your body as often as it came up.

What if you stopped being afraid of it? If you grew your ability to feel it, you would no longer avoid feeling it because you would have the ability to feel it. And then you would no longer avoid taking action that might end up with you feeling it.

So those are the three things you have to do. What you're going to make it mean if you don't succeed x number of times, and I'd be very clear about that number. How many times are you willing to fail? Number two, commit to productively failing. And number three, enhancing your capacity to feel bad.

Now, I want to end this with being very clear that you won't feel the negative emotion of failure every time you fail. You will only feel it when you make it mean something bad. Only when you think something has gone wrong. Only when you believe you wasted your time.

That is the only time you will feel the negative emotion of the failure is when you have a thought that creates the negative emotion around it. And the intensity at which you feel that will have to do with your capacity to feel that emotion.

So go out there, productively fail, work on what you make it mean, commit to that productive failure, enhance your capacity to feel bad, and count your money. Alright, I'll see you next week.

Hey, if you are ready to make money as a life coach, I want to invite you to join my 2K for 2K program, where you're going to make your first \$2000, the hardest part, and then \$200,000 using my proven formula. It's risk-free.

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You either make your 2K or I give you your 2K back. Just head over to www.staceyboehman.com/2kfor2k. We'll see you inside.