

# WHY YOU SHOULD EMBRACE FAILURE

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*Click on Amanda's picture to friend her, message her, or read more of her blog posts!*

There are about one thousand ways we can fail every day. We didn't wake up early enough, we didn't finish a project by deadline, we fumbled in a job interview, we burned the chicken we were grilling for dinner . . . the list can go on and on. And then there are periods in life when we feel like we haven't just failed at something, but that *we ourselves are failures*. We try to pack up all of the things we haven't done and haven't achieved into a cardboard box, mail it as far away as we can from ourselves with 'Do Not Return to Sender' stamped across the front, and continue going about our lives as if the message, 'You're a failure,' hasn't already etched itself into the core of our hearts and driven the direction of our days.

I hit one of those periods in my life the second I graduated college. For six months I applied for jobs that sounded treacherously boring and unfulfilling, I tracked down recruiters like they were long-lost loves who could bring about my happy ending, and I woke up day after day soaked in the stress of trying to answer the question, 'What am I going to do with my life?' But somewhere in the midst of scouring the Internet for a sliver of advice about how to get through the initial scramble that comes with entering the real world, I stumbled across the story of a girl named Jen Glantz.

Jen Glantz wrote an article for the Huffington Post called, 'Life After College: 5 Years Later,' in which she talks about all the ways she'd failed, all the turns in her life and crying sessions on her bathroom floor and withdrawals from her savings account that felt like they were taking her nowhere, until all of a sudden they took her somewhere. She wrote about a business tutor who made her ramble off all the ways she failed, and when she hadn't failed enough he told her to fail some more. She wrote a book, she started a business nobody else would have dreamed of starting, she attracted the attention of huge media outlets like The Today Show—Jen Glantz, from my perspective, became a success. And here she was in this article, saying that she still saw room in her life for more failure.

Shortly after reading her story, I came across the Instagram profile of another 20-something entrepreneur, Hannah Brencher. Now this was a girl who relished and grew from her darkest places—the places most of us label failure. From her profile, I eventually found out about her blog, from which I found out about her TED Talk, a talk that outlines how the feeling of failure and the torture of depression drove her to start leaving love letters for strangers around New York City, which eventually led to the start of her global organization, More Love Letters.

Two very young, very ambitious entrepreneurs. One story of failure being the seed of their success. So what can we learn from them? How is it possible to stop feeling like nothing will ever go right, and instead use the power of failure to drive our journeys to success forward?

I think there's only one answer—failure gives us the opportunity to take monumental risks. When Jen Glantz wanted to write and publish her own stories and nobody was willing to give her a chance, she decided to invest her entire self into starting her own blog. It has now grown instrumentally, has led to her being able to write for other online publications, and led to her writing and publishing her own book of essays. When she wanted to move to New York City, she emptied all of the money in her bank to fly across the country and desperately interview for any kind of job she could find. She ended up being able to stay. When she got

the crazy idea to start a business as a professional bridesmaid (that's right, she gets paid to be a bridesmaid for strangers) she posted a soon-to-be viral ad on Craigslist, and built upward from there. She turned every 'failure' in her life into a risk, and while some probably didn't work out for her, enough of those risks led to her success as a businesswoman today.

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Hannah took a risk when she decided to move to New York by herself for her first year after college to make no money while she served at the United Nations. But her bigger risk was exposing her loneliness to the world by letting strangers know that they weren't alone. It was a risk to blog about the experience of writing love letters to people on the subway, or in coffee shops, or in Grand Central Station, and to open an invitation to everyone on the Internet to send her requests for love letters if they needed one. It was a risk to choose to keep writing those letters when requests showed up in the hundreds. Each step into turning one initial idea into an organization that works to shower people across the world in love required a risk—but when you have little money, few time restraints, and a lot of people needing what you can provide, those risks pay off.

Maybe the risk you need to take is applying to graduate school. Maybe it's taking a job you love for hardly any money instead of a job you'll hate that pays you well. Maybe it's moving across the country, or across the world, where you'll be in a better position to follow your dream. Maybe it's talking about something deeply personal to you, publicly. But whatever risks are out there for us to take, I hope the stories of Jen, Hannah, and countless other successes prove that the risk of doing something different will hurt us less than the failure that awaits us by doing nothing. And maybe one day we'll be able to tell the world how we turned our failures into our proudest accomplishments.