

Famous Failures

by Big Life Journal



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printables

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J.K. Rowling



A novelist and
screenwriter

How she failed...

Many years ago there was a woman named Jo who lived in Scotland. Jo loved to write. She got up every morning and found something to write about. After finishing her first story about a boy named Harry Potter, she wanted to share it with the world. Jo took her book to the best publishers across England. All of them rejected her novel!

How she overcame her failures and succeeded...

Jo didn't give up. She asked her agent to keep trying because she was confident in the story she had written. Even though she sometimes felt confused by the rejection, she pushed forward. After a year of trying, a publisher in London finally accepted her story and she published her novel under the name J.K. Rowling. She finally got to see her novel in stores and in children's hands. She wrote a whole series of books about Harry Potter. Because Rowling believed in herself, she never gave up!



Oprah Winfrey

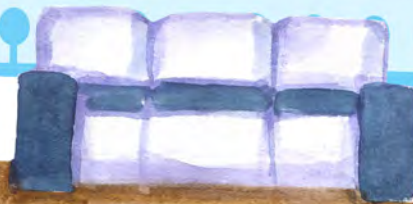


A talk show host,
actress, producer,
and philanthropist

How she failed...

Oprah Winfrey's nickname may be the "Queen of Media," but there was a time when Oprah couldn't even imagine being the success she is today. When she was younger, she was hired to co-host a news show.

Unfortunately, the show did not do well. Oprah was asked to step down as co-host and was eventually fired.



How she overcame her failure and succeeded...

But Oprah didn't let being fired stop her! She took time to reflect on what went wrong and what she wanted in the future. This led her to take a job at a talk show not many people watched. She saw this as an opportunity to do what she loved. She could now tell the positive stories she wanted to tell. This show launched her career and helped her become the famous icon she is today! Today Oprah wisely tells people: "There is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction."



Milton Hershey



The founder of the
Hershey Chocolate
Company

How he failed...

Milton Hershey grew up in the countryside. The land was beautiful and he had a loving family. Although they were happy, the Hersheys were also very poor. So when he was still a young boy, Milton had to leave school to find a job. He searched and searched but could not find a job he liked.

How he overcame his failures and succeeded...

After being fired from his latest job as a printer, Milton felt downhearted. He was worried about money and his family, but being fired was ultimately for the best. His mother and aunt encouraged him to learn how to make candy. He liked the idea a lot! So Milton spent years learning about sugar and chocolates and all sorts of sweets.

Eventually he created The Hershey Company, one of the most successful candy companies in the world.



Michael Jordan



A professional basketball player

How he failed...

There's no question that Michael Jordan is one of the best basketball players ever. But when he was in high school, he didn't make the team at first! Other players were in awe of his skill and speed! But the coach was worried that Michael was too short and wouldn't play well in games. Michael didn't make the team and was downhearted.

How he overcame his failures and succeeded...

Michael was determined to improve! He joined a less competitive team, and put his energy into developing his basketball skills. He practiced for hours day and night! Michael's coach couldn't deny his dedication. He watched Michael become an even greater, more focused player! After college, Michael went on to become one of the most well known athletes. Even as a pro, he experienced failure and made mistakes when his team needed him most. But Michael views failure as a way to figure out how to better himself for the future.



Sudha Chadran



An actress and a dancer

How she struggled...

From a young age people noticed Sudha's talent for dancing. She was accepted to one of the best dance schools in India, at only five years old! Everyone saw the talent and passion in her. But when she was seventeen, Sudha was in a car accident. She was injured and lost her right leg. She was told she would never dance again.

How she overcame her struggles and succeeded...

Sudha worked hard to overcome her challenge. She worked for months to learn to walk again. Eventually she met a doctor who made her an artificial leg. It then took years for her to learn to dance again, but she was motivated. Dance was her passion and she wanted to prove that she could perform again. Though she often failed, she pushed herself to keep trying. Her first public performance even sold out! She achieved her goal of professionally dancing by not letting obstacles and failures defeat her.



Serena Williams



A professional
tennis player

How she struggled...

Almost twenty years ago, Serena started playing professional tennis. She was only fifteen, and she was thrilled! But soon after she started playing professionally, a lot of people criticized her. They made hurtful comments about her appearance and her family. Some of these people never believed she could succeed.



How she overcame her struggles and succeeded...

During these hard times, Serena felt like she failed. At that time her family gave her their love, strength, and support. And she decided to hold her head high and focus on her game. She believed in herself. She had the confidence and perseverance to succeed. Twenty years later, she holds the world record for winning 23 Grand Slams, the biggest matches in professional tennis. She lives her life like she plays tennis: with strength and conviction. A true champion on and off the court!



Soichiro Honda



The founder of
Honda, a car and
motorcycle company

How he struggled...

Since he was little, Soichiro had been in love with motors. He struggled with enjoying school and left home at fifteen without finishing his education. He knew he wanted to work with cars but had no idea where to begin! So he worked his way up from an apprentice to a mechanic, learning all he could about motors along the way.

How he overcame his failures and succeeded...

Later as a young adult, he was offered his dream job! But he turned it down to start his own business making motorcycles! When he first started, no one wanted to buy his motorcycles. They were big and bulky and hard to drive. So he reworked his idea. In no time at all, he designed a new model that everyone loved! Despite his hardships, Soichiro always knew that each failure was just the beginning of a greater success.



Lady Gaga



A singer,
songwriter, and
actress.

How she failed...

There was once a girl named Stefani who grew up in New York City. When she was only five years old, she could play whole songs on the piano! When Stefani was older she started performing her music. In time, a record label signed a contract with her! Unfortunately, the label decided not to record her songs.



How she overcame her failures and succeeded...

Stefani felt defeated. Then she remembered that from a young age all she wanted was to be a musician. So she kept on working: writing lyrics, playing piano, and singing her songs. Soon she got her big break! You might know Stefani by her stage name: Lady Gaga!

When you hear her name, you probably think of a famously successful and talented pop icon. But she'll tell you herself that success is difficult.

The bumpy road to reaching success was worth as much to her as achieving her goals.



Katie Ledecky



A professional swimmer

How she fails...

Katie Ledecky has won many Olympic Gold medals! And she has set 11 world records for swimming! But there were times when even Katie lost races. One time she even came in seventh place (it was a BIG disappointment for her fans). And there are still several world records that she has failed to break.

How Katie achieves her success...

Katie is a focused athlete who doesn't let failure overwhelm her. Every time she gets in a pool, she sets a goal to motivate herself. Since she wants to break world records, she writes down the time she wants to achieve. She calls it a Want Time. She works hard to get closer to the goal each time she swims. And she does! Katie sees the key to her success as not being afraid of failure.



Jack Ma



The founder of
Alibaba Group

How he failed...

Growing up, Jack lived in a rural area in China. When he got older he wanted to go to Harvard University in America. He applied 10 times but was rejected every time. He went to another college instead. After college, he had a hard time finding a job. He applied to 30 different jobs and was rejected by all of them!

How he overcame his failures and succeeded...

One day Jack started to imagine a very different future for himself. After using the Internet for the first time, Jack had a lot of ideas for how China could use it. So he brought together a group of his friends and convinced them to create a business together. They named it Alibaba – a business that is now worth billions of dollars! Today he is known as a remarkable leader of his company. Jack experienced a lot of failures along his way to success. The support and compassion of others helped him to persevere.



Reflection

Find 3 interesting facts about this person. Write down what you learned about him/her here:

1

2

3

What have you learned from this person's story?

Learn More!

All famous people failed before they succeeded greatly! To learn more about famous failures start by picking three people from the list below. Research their stories and record how they failed and persevered using the next three pages.

- Thomas Edison
inventor and businessman from the United States
- Beyonce Knowles
singer, songwriter, dancer, and actress from the United States
- Nova Peris
athlete from Australia
- Jim Carrey
actor from Canada
- James Dyson
inventor and founder of the Dyson company from the United Kingdom
- Katy Perry
singer and songwriter from the United States
- Vincent Van Gogh
Post-Impressionist painter from the Netherlands
- Albert Einstein
physicist from Germany
- Elizabeth Arden
founder of a cosmetics empire from Canada
- Dr. Seuss
children's book author from the United States

.....
Person's Name

How he/she failed...



How he/she overcame his/her failures...

.....
Person's Name

How he/she failed...



How he/she overcame his/her failures...

.....
Person's Name



How he/she failed...



How he/she overcame his/her failures...
