

The Value Of Failure

By Trudy L. Powers

At Prep, every student has opportunities to experience success, whether it's in academics, athletics, fine arts, or extracurricular activities. The feeling of accomplishment can be very rewarding, as it motivates one to persist in his efforts to reach challenging goals. If a student fails to accomplish his desired goal, however, should he stop trying and give up? On the contrary, there is a value in failing because one learns from his mistakes and strengthens his abilities and self-knowledge. George Bernard Shaw once stated, "When I was a young man, I observed that nine out of ten things I did were failures. I didn't want to be a failure, so I did ten times more work." Certainly, Shaw's becoming the first person to win both the Nobel Prize and an Oscar testify to his hard work and persistence.

Most importantly, when a student attempts to meet a goal, he must take full responsibility for his success or failure. Research shows that the value one places on achieving a goal depends on how much responsibility he feels for the outcome. If parents take the responsibility or blame someone else for the student's failure, the student may believe that he is too weak to achieve his goals and thus, become helpless and lose confidence to try again at a later time.

Parents and teachers can use the moment of a student's failure as a "teachable moment" by encouraging him to explore more effective strategies to use in achieving desired goals. Failure can then become the impetus for growth.

Students must know that failure in performance does not mean failure as a person. The American author Napoleon Hill once said, "The majority of men meet with failure because of their lack of persistence in creating new plans to take the place of those which failed." Let's keep our students encouraged by supporting their efforts and by helping them learn to persist.