

Code and name of activity:	T_TR_09_WR: Success and failure
Competencies developed:	taking responsibility willingness to take risks
Time needed:	60 minutes
Materials:	handout
Setting:	chairs and tables
Type:	3 person/ team teamwork
Aim:	At the end of the activity participants have a clearer sense of the fact that the person is responsible for framing the outcomes of actions as failure or success.
Objectives:	At the end of the activity participants have a clearer sense of elements contributing to the framing of outcomes as a success or failure and that most situations are ambiguous – so risking failure is an element of increasing the probability of success.
Handouts:	L_TR_09_WR: Success and failure / participant
Short description:	Based on situation descriptions identifying successful and failure elements, personal examples are to be discussed in small groups. Taking one example/group to whole group discussion (without name).

Rationale:

Success and failure are a part of our daily life. Sometimes we hear people saying “I am on cloud 9” – or “I am down in the dumps.” These are the two endpoints of the same dimension. People are different in the manner they are motivated to balance between these feeling in their attempts to reach their goals. Success oriented persons have a strong need to do something important, success on challenging tasks provides them satisfaction. That is why they are willing to persist over an extended period of time in spite of set-backs – and when they finally succeed they feel they are on cloud 9. Failure avoidant persons, on the other hand, are motivated to avoid failure and the unpleasant feelings attached to it – even in tasks interesting to them. As a result they will tend to prefer relatively easier tasks and avoid those where the outcome is ambiguous. When undertaking an ambiguous task is inevitable – they will start procrastinating – and by this start the cycle of relative failure (e.g. start completing the task at the last minute when there is not enough time to produce high-quality work – although the person would be able to if they had had more time). Failure-avoidant persons sometimes engage in other self-defeating behaviour, e.g. forgetting to set the alarm clock before an important interview next morning – and thus being late.

Of course these are the two extremes and most people are somewhere in between. What we look upon as success or failure depends on how we formulate the goal – and the probability of success is influenced by abilities as relative to goals formulates, i.e. how realistic the goal is.

Self-esteem influences how we frame our experiences. A person with high self-esteem looks upon a failure as an opportunity to learn, as an indication that more effort is needed or new perspective on the problem has to be taken. These are qualities that are indispensable if an enterprise is to be successful.

Remark: This activity is an extension of T_PO_10_DM: Long- and short-term goals providing an opportunity to examine the goals set by the protagonists comply with SMART goal-setting principles or not.

Step-by-step description of activity:

1. After citing the thoughts of the rationale as in introduction to the activity cite Edison's saying – who after hundreds of unsuccessful trials had nearly already given up on inventing the lamp-bulb: "I do not look upon my experiments as failures – I have only discovered 100 ways I cannot reach my goal." Discuss with the group what this saying means.
2. Form 3 person teams (if needed have a pair, as well.).
3. Provide each participant with a handout. The participants work in these small teams to identify whether the protagonists of each situation/vignette could feel that they are successful or failed – and why? There is no one good solution, the reasoning is important so it is advisable to look at the situation from different viewpoints.
4. After about 15-20 minutes teams should provide feedback on what conclusions they have arrived at, using what type of reasoning. The goal is to share the thoughts and reasoning behind the outcomes – as there is not one good answer.
 Vignette „a“. The goal of doing A levels when GSCE was nearly failed is unrealistic. To top it all a precursor of possible success would have been persistence in working towards the goal – which is totally lacking.
 Vignette „b“ may be judged as the protagonist having a realistic goal – as there was effort, previous experience behind the performance and a skilled person has acknowledged the achievement – in spite the fact that in reality there is still room for improvement (one of the rungs is crooked).
 Vignette „c“ : the goal is realistic, there is a degree of commitment – she has been accepted and she regularly works towards her aim. Self-doubt may appear due to social stereotyping.
 Vignette „d“ is similar to „c“, but it is questionable whether 2 months' of effort will be enough to bring about the needed change.
 Vignettes „c“ & „d“ provide an opportunity to talk about gender stereotyping – what jobs and activities are thought of as "feminine" and which as "masculine".
5. After a whole group discussion the teams should try and gather situations where they had similar ambiguous feelings. In their respective teams they should discuss feelings attached to success and failure. The group should choose one of the situations with one person reporting back to the whole group – keeping the source anonymous.
6. During the whole-group discussion each team shares one situation (without putting a name to it) and other participants should try and identify why the person could have felt success or failure. After the others have voiced their thoughts the team – providing the situation depicted – describes the thoughts of the team.
7. As the closing element of the activity have participants share one of their successes- when they felt they were on top of the world.

Please put into each participant's personal portfolio all student artefacts that are the outcome of this activity.