

# FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION.

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It's a requirement.

Last night, poor Laura Bassett failed. She made a horrific blunder that was not only witnessed by millions of people world wide, but single-handedly (footedly?) eliminated her team from the World Cup championship. It is a moment that she will never forget and likely never forgive herself for. Yet, her teammates came to her side. Indeed, her country and the world of social media stood up for her, calling her "a rock", "brave and courageous", and "a role model".

How? How can a world in which social feeds often turn into shark-infested feeding frenzies suddenly put on a brave face and pat this young woman on the back, saying "We've got you, girl. You did us proud"?

It's because of all the other ways that she didn't fail.

Laura- and her teammates- played their hearts out. They put everything on the line throughout the entire World Cup, bringing their team to their first semi-final ever. Laura didn't play with half of her heart. She didn't lose her focus on the game. She did not, **WOULD NOT**, let the Japanese attacker near the ball. Laura failed and, consequently, the game was lost for England; there's no shirking that. But that failure came from a place of giving the game her all, doing the best she could and-hey-sometimes stuff happens.

Laura could have been on the sidelines. She could have been a has-been sitting up in the stands. She could have been a never-tried back home in England. Instead, she put herself out there and worked for her dreams. This will be the most glorious of all failures that will ever mark her career, but I can guarantee you that she's got a few others in her bag that she's earned along the way. She never would have made it this far otherwise.

We fail. It's a part of learning. We head doggedly towards our goals and, along the way, fall into ditches (sometimes literally), say something stupid, or lose the big event. We sign up for classes that are too hard, we try to (finally) read Moby Dick, we attempt to ride a bike over a mountain. Many times, we succeed and we revel in our cleverness. Other times the book ends up back in the corner or we find ourselves sitting on the side of the mountain, hosting a pity party over our own weakness.

You could never set yourself up for failure. You can pick the easy route, every time. Train for the event that you could do in your sleep. Settle for a goal that is already within your reach. Do nothing worthwhile or risky at all. Play a soccer game, but only just hard enough- never putting yourself too far out there. You can do those things. You will learn nothing, achieve nothing, and grow nowhere.

It is inherent to our nature to fail, learn, and then do better next time. This is where we improve our skills, gain fitness, become more educated, and-ultimately- earn self-confidence. Risks are abundant, but are often far more valuable than the easy road and the soft couch. The key is to fail just enough. You never aim for failure- Laura Bassett didn't head into last night's game thinking "Gee, I hope I make some errors tonight." She aimed for playing the game of her life. This meant running harder than she thought she could and going for the ball in ways that could be downright scary, all in front of millions of viewers world-wide. Despite that single, devastating moment, she has likely never felt more alive.

When I was in high school, I attended an event in which the speaker-a band conductor- relayed a story. This story had the whole room in tears and has left an indelible mark on my heart. I cannot do it justice here, but suffice it to say that it was about a young boy with a disability who participated in his event (marching band) with all of his heart. His disability caused him to fail a lot. He fell down, he dropped things, and he was the slowest guy on the field. But he loved it and kept trying. Eventually, he fell ill and passed away, leaving behind an unforgettable legacy of determination and passion. Before he died, he spoke with the conductor who asked him "Why did you keep going? You suffered so much to keep up with the band, and yet you always got up and kept going. How were you able to do it all and still smile?"

"Dr. Tim," the boy said. "Sometimes you have to be scared to death to really know how much fun it is to live."

Failure is not an option. It's our only path to success.