

Key stage 3 or 4 Lesson 3: Resilience and reframing failure

Resource 1: Reframing failure activity

There are several ways we can reframe failure. In Kayla's case, the failure was a physical one – she developed multiple sclerosis – but she was determined not to let this stand in her way. For each of the five ways of reframing failure below, discuss with a partner whether this could be applied to Kayla's story, and if so, how.

- 1 Stop judging.** Silence your inner critic. What happened, happened. Forgive yourself and others – shame and resentment only hold you back. So instead of dwelling on the past, focus on what you can do in the present and the future. It doesn't have to be perfect. Nothing is perfect. Just learn from what happened and continue to improve.
- 2 Focus on WHY.** Like a determined, unbiased detective, explore and list all the possible reasons the outcome occurred. This vital collection of data will help craft your next approach. If you can, try to determine what precise variables created the outcome.
- 3 Get comfortable being uncomfortable.** Fear of failure can cause paralysis – from over-analysing while staying in the realm of certainty. But powerful change doesn't usually occur in the comfort zone. So take a chance, make a calculated leap ... allow yourself to get into a state of discomfort. That is the only way you can fulfill your potential.
- 4 It's a marathon, not a sprint.** No one reaches the finish line on the first try. Your path will have its ups and downs too. Don't dwell on each 100-metre sprint; focus on your long-term goal.
- 5 Acknowledge your progress.** Try to ditch any all-or-nothing thinking you might have. What does that mean? 'I haven't succeeded yet' is not the same as 'I failed'. If you're halfway through running a marathon, should you criticise yourself for the miles you haven't yet covered? No! You acknowledge the tremendous progress you've already made – and you keep going. And before you know it, you'll be more than halfway there.

How could Bill, Belle and Bailey learn from these five ways of reframing failure? What might a friend, parent or teacher advise them?

Bill: Bill is worried that he isn't clever enough to pass his GCSEs. He is worried that if he tries and fails people will think he's stupid, so instead he's given up altogether. He's been skiving off school and has hardly done any homework for months. If anyone asks, he says he doesn't care. Deep down he's worried that he's making a big mistake but he also thinks that he'll feel less miserable if he fails from not trying than from not being good enough despite trying his best.

Belle: Belle failed her mock exams and is absolutely convinced she's going to fail the real thing too. She feels like it's a done deal and there's nothing she can do to change things.

Bailey: Everyone is really pleased with how Bailey did in her mocks, except for Bailey. She got mostly Bs and a couple of As, which her teachers thought was brilliant and gave them confidence that Bailey will excel in her summer exams. But Bailey is really down about her results, saying that Bs and As just aren't good enough. She's always been a real perfectionist and nothing but the best results make her happy.