

On a failure•

Description

There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure.

Paulo Coelho

In May, I publicly launched [my YouTube channel](#). I'm vlogging. (Do people still use that?) And I've been really leaning into my Gen X label here as a crutch. It took me months to gain the courage to start. Then it took me months to share my channel publicly. And now it's taken me another month to post my next video, and talk about this.

When I launched my page, I set a goal. I expressed my goal publicly. My goal was 500 subscribers by the end of May. I hit 74.

During one of my first college basketball games my freshman year, I shot an airball. Every time I touched the ball for the rest of the game everyone throughout the auditorium chanted "AIR-BALL!!" in perfect unison. And when I say everyone, I mean in the moment, it felt like everyone- even my teammates, the announcer, and my parents- must have been chanting along, hands cupped firmly around their mouths.

Just typing out this story physiologically takes me right back to that moment: blood pressure rising, face burning, hands tingling, chest tightening, vision narrowing!

When I checked [my YouTube channel](#) on May 31 and saw that number, 74, I knew I had airballed. And my inner critic was chanting hard.

I've had a lot of airballs through my life- embarrassing misses. I've always struggled though to just count them as misses and keep moving forward. Instead, I drown myself in the shame of failure and let it fester for months, sometimes years.

Here's an example of a failure I've held onto for far too long. By sharing it with you all today, I am choosing to release it. This moment in my life doesn't define me. It never did and it certainly doesn't now.

Twenty-four years ago (damn.) at the end of that same season, I quit my college basketball team. I had let the angst I felt in that airball moment carry through the rest of the season. In my mind at the time, quitting was the worst, most embarrassing, most shameful thing I could have ever done, yet, I did.

- I shamed myself for being weak because workouts were hard.
- I shamed myself for being selfish because I was disappointed that I hadn't gotten more playing time.
- I shamed myself for letting down so many people I loved because I had a huge support system of folks who believed in me far greater than I did in myself.

- I shamed myself for giving up because I wasn't raised to be a quitter.
- I shamed myself for being ungrateful because they had recruited me and offered me a full scholarship and I was walking away.
- I shamed myself because I failed. Because I couldn't hack it.

All these years later that "failure" is still with me. It comes up in times like these. Thankfully now I'm better equipped to talk some sense into my inner critic. What my inner critic doesn't readily remember is that I was spiraling for the second half of the season. I was excruciatingly unhappy and existing in a very dark and isolated space. The game I loved was no longer fun for me. My mental health was in dire need, **and I stuck it out through the end of the season to finish what I had started: win.** I made a super tough decision to quit because I chose to take care of my mental health: win. I approached the volleyball coach to ask if I could try out for a position on the squad. After a year away from the sport, in the midst of a mental breakdown, and under the heavy cloud of failure, I made the volleyball team. And was awarded a full ride scholarship. **Win.**

Even though that was a huge confidence boost I very much needed at the time, I still couldn't shake the feeling that I was a reject baller in knee pads. (Back in my day, knee pads were only worn by volleyballers). And for the remainder of my college years I suffered through every basketball game I watched from the stands. Under my cloud of failure.

Here I am, 24 years later, (that's correct; I just recounted. Yikes). And that familiar tinge of failure came right back to me when I saw my subscribers 74/500! that's bad. That's an airball. But I'm not going to let this airball drag me down to the point of quitting. I'm not going to allow this airball to label myself as a failure. I took a shot. I missed. I'll keep practicing, learning, growing, stretching, and I'll shoot again. More videos to come on [my channel](#); hopefully more subscribers, too!

This is all part of my journey living and leading with anxiety. A small glimpse in the mind of an anxious, recovering perfectionist, high achiever. We tend to hold on to our misses and forget all about our successes. Anxiety churns the thoughts over and over and over in my mind until I feel that I can't breathe in my own skin. But this journey I'm on is about proving to my anxiety that I call the shots in my life. I am driving! And I am in control of my own mind, hard as that may seem at times. And that in itself is a win.

How do you define "failure"? I think I'm just throwing the word away today. It really hasn't served me in any positive way. Who is with me? If you're ready to take something you've been thinking of as a "failure" and reframe it- share with us in the comments! **What were your wins from the experience?**

P.S. Another win- my volleyball teammates were (are) amazing women. Some of my dearest friendship still today came from that volleyball program. And some of the most fun college memories. I'm so grateful for that challenging time in my young life. This post is for all those knee pad rockin' ladies! #SkoBods!

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Date Created
2023/06/07

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