“There are thousands of books on success. But very few on failure,” begins Siimon Reynolds in *Why People Fail*. “Yet mastering failure is surely a vital step in achieving your aims, hopes, and dreams.”

He is passionately driven to take the "taboo" out of failure. As Reynolds suggests it is a "forbidden subject. We're not supposed to fail and if we do, we're supposed to hide it from everybody. It gives people the wrong impression about what it takes to be successful."

Failure leads to success—if you see it as a process. “If someone has achieved more than you, it’s not usually because they are better than you or smarter than you. It’s because they have discovered a better strategy for success.”

Reynolds has identified 16 reasons for failure. They are:

1. **Unclear purpose**
   Reynolds claims that the reason average people are average is because they have no clear purpose. “It is not unusual to see people working 12 hours a day and still not getting anything substantial done. Why? At the heart of it, their lack of clarity about the best use of their time leads them to work on what’s urgent, not what’s important.” Foggy purpose leads to mediocre results, says Reynolds. Zig Ziglar remarked, “Most people are a wandering generality rather than a meaningful specific.”

2. **Destructive thinking**
   Not surprisingly, destructive thinking has a dramatic impact on both our health and our behavior.
   Reynolds recommends the SCORE technique created by Jim Fannin. Before you begin a new task, ask yourself: Are you working toward your goals? (Self-Discipline), Are you focused? (Concentration), Are you positive? (Optimism), Are you calm? (Relaxation), and Are you choosing to have fun? (Enjoyment).

3. **Low productivity**
   Getting productive begins with planning before you start. Make a list. Break your work down into blocks of time. Reynolds says that when he’s feeling down or lazy, he likes to separate his day into 10-minute blocks. Working in short bursts boosts his momentum and increased his concentration. This technique he learned from Igvar Kamprad, founder of IKEA. Kamprad says, “Divide your life into 10-minute units and
sacrifice as few of them as possible in meaningless activity.”

4. **Fixed mindset**
People with a fixed mindset believe that their capabilities are set in stone. They tend to not try hard, give up early, and don’t try new things. In contrast, people with a growth mindset believe that with dedication and effort you can get better. They tend to forgive more, see problems as temporary, learn from their mistakes, and have faith in the future. What would happen if you worked a little harder at something you feel you’re not good at?

5. **Weak energy**
Success takes energy. Success requires good sleep, a proper diet, exercise, and a balanced lifestyle.

6. **Not asking the right questions**
The questions you are create the things you think about and the direction of your life. You should be asking yourself the following questions frequently: What are my values? What would I do if I knew I couldn’t fail? What could go wrong? How could I make 10 times more money? What would X do? Should I even be involved with this? How would my competition defeat me? What’s the best use of my time right now? When I die, what kind of life would I like to have lived? How could I improve that performance?

7. **Poor presentation skills**
“Presenting well will increase your confidence and your salary faster than almost any other skill. Your boss will want you to lead more and your clients will trust you more. You’ll feel in command and in control, and others will sense that they’re dealing with someone highly capable and dynamic.”

8. **Mistaking IQ for EQ**
A priceless ability for leaders, those with a strong EQ (emotional intelligence) are able to perceive emotions, use emotions, understand emotions, and manage emotions. “When it comes to everyday practical living, EQ beats IQ every time.”

9. **Poor self-image**
Self-image is important because it determines what actions you will take and how you will feel each and every day. It’s like your “mental operating software…a mental blueprint of what’s possible for you.” Mostly, you are not your conscious thought. According to Deepak Chopra, about 70% of your thoughts are not new. They are the same thoughts you had yesterday. “The truth is, because of their low self-image most people are selling themselves short.” Think about your self-image and focus on building it up. Act-as-if. Consider the people you socialize with. Are they building you up? Visualize who you could be.

10. **Not enough thinking**
We are obsessed with doing and don’t spend enough time thinking. Brainstorm regularly.

11. **No daily rituals**
Daily rituals enable even average people to become champions of life and ultimately outperform others who seemingly have more talent. “If you can add a structure to your goals, a ritual you do daily, you will increase the chances of achieving them by 1000%.” If you’re not getting the results you want in any area of your life, Reynolds attributes it to a lack of ritual.

12. Stress
Stress can kill. Relieve stress with deep breathing and the practice of releasing. You might try list making, dividing your stress into things you can do something about and things you can’t, cleaning and simplifying your environment, getting outside, eating properly and creating order in your life.

13. Few relationships
You can’t get there alone. You must enlist the help of many others along the way. Develop your ability to develop strong personal relationships.

14. Lack of persistence
Giving up too soon is at the heart of many failures for two reasons. The first is a poor self-image. “Deep down they don’t have the faith that they are capable of pulling off a great victory, so when they try, they do so in a tentative, half-hearted manner and are ready to give up at the first sign of difficulty.” And second, they think there is something wrong with failure. Champions know they are going to fail numerous times, so they get on with it.

15. Money obsession
Professor Tim Kasser remarked, “The more materialistic values are at the center of our lives, the more our quality of life is diminished.” Research shows that people who focus on the material things are less satisfied with their lives. There is nothing wrong with money, but we shouldn’t build our life around it. Better to focus on relationships, community, serving others, and appreciation.

16. Not focusing on strengths
Know your strengths to maximize you natural strengths. Not everything you need to do can be centered around your strengths, but the more you do, the more successful and enjoyable your life will be.

If you are struggling, you can probably identify with at least one of the above reasons. Actually, all of us can identify with some of them and could benefit from designing a ritual to overcome them one by one. It’s not always easy but it is doable. Pick one and make a commitment to conquer it.