



Fear of Failure: Questions to Help You Get Over It

How to use these questions

Choose the one thing you have been putting off and keep it in mind as you read. Pick two or three questions, not all of them, and write for five minutes on each. Then look for one small step in what you wrote and put it in your calendar for this week. Fear tends to shrink once it has a date and a size.

Pin down the fear

- 1 What is the one thing you want to try but keep postponing?

- 2 If it fails, what exactly happens in the first week afterwards?

- 3 Who do you picture watching when you imagine failing?

- 4 What would people actually say, and what do you fear they would think but not say?

- 5 Is the fear about losing something, or about what failing would mean about you?

- 6 On a scale of 1 to 10, how bad would the realistic worst case feel a year later?

Where it comes from

- 7 When did you first learn that failing was dangerous?

- 8 How did the adults around you react when you got something wrong as a child?

- 9 Which past failure still decides what you are willing to try?



10 Whose failure did you watch up close, and what did you conclude from it?

11 What do you think success would force you to keep up?

What waiting costs

12 What has playing it safe cost you in the past year?

13 If you never try this, how will you feel about it at seventy?

14 What are you doing instead of the thing you are afraid of?

15 How much time have you spent preparing, compared with doing?

16 What would you lose by trying and failing that you are not already losing by waiting?

Shrinking the risk

17 What is a version of this so small it would be hard to fail at?

18 What could you try this week that you could undo if it went badly?

19 What do you need to know before starting, and how could you find it out in one day?

20 Who has done this before you, and what did their early attempts look like?

21 If a friend tried this and failed, what would you honestly think of them?

22 What would count as a good attempt, even if the result is not what you hoped?

After a failure

23 What did you fail at in the past that turned out fine, or even useful?

24 What do you say to yourself right after you get something wrong?

25 What would you want to remember on the day something does go wrong?

26 How would you like to treat yourself on the evening after a failed attempt?

27 If it fails, what would you try again, and what would you change?

28 What would you attempt this month if failing only cost you one awkward evening?
