



# Prepare to fail

*“Failing gets a bad wrap, much like Colonel Quaritch in Avatar”*

**F**ailing is one of the most important experiences you can have at uni, and one I have never written about. The best part is, it requires very little work. In fact you will probably achieve this without even trying.

Failing gets a bad wrap, much like Colonel Quaritch in Avatar (the bad guy). Oh sure having a crew-cut and an eagle tattoo is a major cliché, and yes he engages in mass genocide while enjoying a steaming cup of joe and has been known to utter phrases like, ‘You crossed the line’ and then punch you in the face. In fact now that I think about

it, he would probably make a great boyfriend for Rhianna.

But on the upside. The guy is a fucking badass. Oh look I’m on fire, no biggy. Oh look I can’t breathe because I kicked down an airlock, no biggy. My entire squadron has been shot down and I am overrun by giant blue aliens, no biggy.

He is a man who definitely enjoys the smell of napalm in the morning.

Failing is demonised by high school teachers and parents but is often a blessing in disguise. Think of the age old adage, ‘the only way we learn is by making mistakes’. Our elders

seem happy to dish out this wisdom on a steaming platter when your soccer team loses the under 15’s final or you don’t get picked in a talent search but when it comes to grades, reports and degrees the kitchen remains strangely silent. It’s bullshit.

They’re not afraid of you making mistakes, they’re afraid of you falling behind. Why would you fall behind? Because life is a competition, a rat race. The difference is; we used to compete to survive, for food, for water, for shelter. Now we are taught to compete for possessions, for blue jeans and light beer.

Our culture has become

obsessed with results. So failing is suddenly more than just a mistake, it is a dire setback on the road to achieving – what exactly? Success! I have a feeling that the big cheese at the end of the maze won’t be anywhere near as ripe as expected.

I told myself I could pass any test a man could pass, and then I failed. Failing a subject can be a much needed wake-up call. For me it was a coms subject in second year, 46 per cent, almost the perfect amount of effort. It reminded me that it is essential to know your limits and keep your ego in check. If you want to survive


you have to obey the rules. Our bones after all are not reinforced with a naturally occurring carbon fiber and we are very easy to kill.

It was the one and only subject I ever failed because I learned from my mistake and made sure never to repeat it (I made smarter subject choices for one).

We shouldn’t let ourselves live in fear of failure. It’s just like Bear Grylls says, ‘Risk nothing, gain nothing’.

The people who are never prepared for failure are the ones most devastated by it. That’s why you have perfectionist teens with mental breakdowns and

degenerative social disorders. I knew one guy who had to pick up a pen a dozen times before he was reassured he had the best grip.

Be prepared for failure but don’t plan for it. Low gravity makes you soft and if you get soft life will shit you out dead with zero warning, There is a fine line between accepting the reality of failure and abandoning responsibility for your mistakes. In short, don’t get lost in the woods and forget what side your playing for. 

**Tom Cummins**

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