

Rachel Simmons, *New York Times* best-selling author and confidence expert on how to encourage girls to embrace failure

## ENCOURAGE HER TO TAKE HEALTHY RISKS EVEN WHEN FAILURE IS AN OPTION



**The Problem:**

**8 in 10 girls say societal pressure to be perfect drives their fear of failure** and leads many to play it safe.<sup>1</sup> While it's hard to watch the girl in your life struggle, when adults swoop in to rescue girls from their setbacks, they deprive them of the chance to become confident, resilient and resourceful.



**The Solution:**

**Identify moments** where the consequences of a mistake are relatively minimal for her, then let her face them on her own. Approach her ability to fail (and bounce back) as another skill you are teaching her, not something to be avoided at all costs.



**Take Action:**

The ability to **leave her comfort zone** and **take risks is a core component of confidence**. Model healthy risk-taking by regularly picking something you both have never done and doing it together. If she tries and makes a mistake, empathize (“That’s really hard and I’m sorry this happened”) and let her navigate the situation on her own. Afterwards, talk about what she learned, what made her proud about the way she handled it, and what she might do differently next time.

## HELP HER OWN HER NEXT STEP(S)

**The Problem:**

**Girls are more likely to blame themselves** and doubt their ability when things go wrong. They may adopt a black-and-white view of an outcome, thinking they have either succeeded or failed.



**The Solution:**

**Expand her focus** to include smaller wins and lessons learned. After a failure, help her regroup by asking her to write down some short-term actions she can take next. Focus on small, doable goals (*anything that can be accomplished in a single day*).



**Take Action:**

Ask her to name one thing she can do in the next few days to move closer to her goal. If she suggests a goal you suspect is too ambitious, break it down into smaller pieces.



**Example:**

- The Setback:** She received a low grade on a test
- The Goal:** Higher final grade in the class
- Next Steps:** Email a student tutor tonight; ask the teacher tomorrow for help with better study strategies; find a study buddy by Monday

## SHARE YOUR OWN STORY & WALK THE TALK



**The Problem:**

**Girls often imagine that the adults they admire don't make mistakes**, making their own missteps seem unusual or like something they need to hide. So talk about your failures! Young girls will also closely watch the way you respond to setbacks.



**The Solution:**

**Be conscious** of how you talk to yourself when you make a mistake and practice self-kindness in front of her whenever possible.



**Take Action:**

**Share a time when you failed**, one that won't upset you (or her) too much. Describe how you felt, how you handled it and what you learned. Knowing that you've struggled, too, will comfort and motivate her.