

Get Going!

Are you sometimes paralyzed by fear when you meet a new challenge? I had a project that I just could not start. I literally avoided it. The project was writing, a type of writing I had never attempted. What if I couldn't deliver professionally? What if I found that I just wasn't good enough or smart enough? What if I lost my credibility?

It wasn't until I read my friend Lori's LinkedIn profile¹ that I realized what was really holding me back. Lori wrote that to turn a challenge into an opportunity one must remove fear: the fear of failure, the fear of being inadequate. Bingo!

We all get stuck from time to time and begin to doubt ourselves. For example, your new assignment is something you have never done, so you might start wondering if you can live up to your expectations or the expectations of others? What if you expose your flaws and limitations? Instead of accepting personal responsibility, you may procrastinate and make excuses. And if the source of the fear becomes an obsession, it impairs your ability to focus. As many do, you may think your professional skills and abilities are fixed. They aren't. So suck it up and get going.

Here are some steps you can take to overcome the paralysis.

- Meet the new challenge with *effort*, delve into the details.
 - Let me reassure you that, skills and abilities are not fixed.
 - In *The New Science of Learning*² the authors write “performance reflects only your current skills and efforts not your intelligence, worth, or potential... One thing about human intelligence is absolutely certain: it is malleable, meaning that it can be changed through exposure to new information... There is no limit to what you can learn.”
- Talk back to yourself.
 - How you interpret challenge is a choice. “I'm not sure I can do it now, but I can learn to do it with time and hard work.”
 - So what if I fail? Most successful people experience failure along the way. You took a risk and growth does not happen without some risk. Use that failure. When you fail, examine the approach you used and the amount of work you put forth. Know what caused the failure and grow.

¹ Lori A. Marra. *LinkedIn*. [Profile page.] Retrieved November 30, 2013 from http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=21021393&locale=en_US&trk=tyah&trkInfo=tas%3Alori%20%2Cidx%3A1-2-2

² Doyle, Terry and Zakrajsek, Todd. *The New Science of Learning*. Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2013. 86.

- Move.
 - Go for a walk or a run and “blow the cobwebs from your brain.”
 - Moving around helps you find the feelings behind what you are thinking, so the ideas come. Moving helps you find the tempo you need to express your thoughts articulately.
- Talk with colleagues, friends, or family.
 - Just talking it out with an attentive listener helps you formulate ideas.
 - Listen to yourself during the conversation.

Growth and success include risk. In *The New Science of Learning*,³ Dole and Zakrajsek explain the concept of mindset: one’s view about one’s own intelligence and abilities. Mindsets fall into two categories: “fixed mindsets” and “growth mindsets.” You can have a fixed mindset in one area and a growth mindset in another area. If you are a person with a fixed mindset, for instance about learning a language, you believe that your language intelligence is a fixed trait (despite hundreds of studies that found otherwise). A person with a fixed mindset sticks to what he knows he can do well. If you are a person with a growth mindset, you know that your abilities can be further developed and improved. It will take hard work and persistence. There will be **rewards** and maybe a client who says, “I love it.”

³ Doyle, Terry and Zakrajsek, Todd. *The New Science of Learning*. Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2013. 86-87.