

How to turn failure to success

A lot of authors speak about how true success is overcoming the fear of being unsuccessful. But that is easier said than done. We all face situations where we fail and it feels like everything is going wrong. That coveted job interview that does not result in a call back, that amazing person who doesn't reciprocate romantic interest, that close friend who is not keen on hanging out anymore feature in all of our lives. Somewhere these experiences chip away at one's sense of self, slowly eroding our self-worth.

Carrie Fisher, who had immortalised Princess Leia in Star Wars, had said it beautifully, "take your broken heart and make it into art". That is exactly what 18-year-old Londoner Claudia did. She had received a rejection letter from Oxford, like many other students, in response to her application for a Classics course. However, she was not dejected by it. By the time her mother got home from work,

Claudia had cut up the letter and transformed it into a beautiful piece of art.

When her mum posted Claudia's art on Twitter, it touched a chord among thousands and went viral in a matter of days, having been liked and retweeted more than two hundred thousand times.

Claudia explained her motivations in such a way: "I just thought I had this letter, it's not often that you get a letter dedicated to you from Oxford. So, I thought it would be funny if I made it into something." The letter is pretty much summarised in the phrases stuck into the painting: delivering the news, apologising, wishing her well.

She created the painting very quickly, explaining, "I suppose some of my feelings about the letter went into the artwork. Obviously I didn't know it would go viral as I painted it for myself — but I think the message that it's associated with now is that Oxbridge doesn't determine your worth as a person, and I love that." A lot of people are saying Oxford should now take Claudia on an art course but that's not really how it works.

She is joining another premier institution — Durham university — soon, leaving behind her brief disappointment from Oxford as she embarks on the new phase of her life. However, there are life lessons that this young girl can teach us on how to cope with rejection.

It always feels a bit hurtful to be rejected, but when you can turn your disappointment into art, it helps you to move on. After all, closed doors hide open ones. It's impossible that things go well all the time. Even for those who seem super successful, there are still low points and adverse situations they have had to tackle. But brooding over what did not work out will only lead to missing out newer opportunities. Success and failure can truly be understood only in retrospect. What seems like heart-breaking rejection might turn out to be the start of the best thing ever to happen to you in another five years.

Letting go is important but what is even more important is letting go beautifully. As the proverb goes — "In the end, only three things matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you".

Failure is a part of life. You can call it whatever you want — a setback, an emotional let down, a breakup, a loss, but part of the reason why the experience is so painful is because at some level you feel you failed. The solution here is being open to the bigger lessons of life. After all, learning a new way to see situations can be the very key to your next success.

In her own words, Claudia used the letter for a piece of art because she...

1. ...was overfilled with emotions.
2. ...believed it was a good idea.
3. ...wanted to remember the event.
4. ...thought the letter was funny.