



The Builder

Suppose that an individual needs to build a house but he lacks the skills to do so. In this example, this person spends weeks working on the house project and it is a great struggle. This person does the best that he can to buy the tools to build the house and then he tries to use these tools for the actual construction of the house itself. Now suppose, in this example, that after a few weeks the house is built so clumsily that it does not pass inspection and cannot be lived in. This person who tried to build the house then gives up. Was this situation a total failure?

Consider the fact that the person who worked on the house now still has some of the tools that were bought. This person also got to practice some of the skills involved in construction as well as learning to start to use the tools. The next time this person gets motivated to build a house again do you think that he will be in better shape for the next house-building attempt? Of course! This person is better prepared as he has learned some lessons from past mistakes and he can now use experience from the first attempt for the future. This example has a direct parallel when it comes to substance use issues. Even if a person “fails” in a traditional sense (or in other words, does not achieve abstinence) they still have learned some valuable skills and tools, and gained some experience and insight that will make them stronger and more prepared for next time. Therefore even when someone does not achieve the ideal outcome (sobriety) any attempt at upward change is still valuable and often brings with it a degree of progress in spite of an initial period of frustration.

If abstinence is the ideal, then we should never allow the thinking that falling short of the ideal is automatically not “good” or a definitive “failure”. There is something to be gained each time anyone attempts the process of upward change. There can be a relative degree of success and growth even without achieving sobriety provided that we look beyond perfection as the way we measure success.



When you think you have failed, remember that each time that you have tried is just another brick in your WALL of SUCCESS...
... So keep on trying and you will keep on building upward,
... regardless of what happens today