

Embracing Failure: How to Turn Setbacks into Opportunities for Growth

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By Prachi Salvi, Peer Wellness Ambassador.

When I first stepped onto the Newnham campus of Seneca College as an international student, I was amazed by the beautiful infrastructure and study lounges they had. The city itself was beautiful, the skyline was so pretty with CN tower being so tall in comparison to the other buildings. The enormous buildings, the multicultural buzz, and the scent of different cuisines wafting through the air - it all felt like a dream. But as the novelty of my new surroundings wore off, I faced a series of challenges that put my resilience to the test.

Social media often paints a picture of a life that's all sparkle and shine. It showcases the highlights, the successes, and the joyous moments. Rarely do we see posts that touch upon the realities, the challenges, and the not-so-glamorous, challenging moments of life. The behind-the-scenes struggles often remain hidden, unaccounted for in this curated digital narrative.

Just two weeks into my first month, I had so many things to do. Finding a good place to stay was hard. I had to look at many places and talk to many landlords. At the same time, school was different too. The way teachers taught and the way they gave grades was new to me.

I was also looking for a part-time job. Sending out job applications and going for interviews took a lot of my time. At home, I had to learn to do everything myself like cleaning, saving money, and even cooking. Without my family's support, everything was a big challenge and I suddenly felt like I was not good at anything.

Adulting is hard!

The blow to my confidence was immense. I questioned if I was cut out for this journey, if I should pack up and go home where everything was not only familiar but also within my comfort zone. But then, I took a deep breath and decided to keep going. Sure, getting adjusted to my "new life" was tough, and everything felt so different. But I reminded myself that I chose this path for a reason. It's okay to feel unsure sometimes.

I took time to figure things out, the problems that I faced the most was living without my family, I miss them everyday, so I started giving new things a try. I video-called my parents

every day, I kept in touch with my friends in my home-country. I pushed myself to do new things here, I tried going to workshops, attending my classes in-person, making new friends, visited new places, cafes & libraries, I tried building a support system for myself.

I realized that I needed to stop grading myself to be good at everything because I was doing all of this for the very first time. I figured out that I just needed to give things time to fall into place. I realized that being on top of everything at the same time was not possible, so I needed to prioritize what was most important to me and work my way down the lists slowly.

Everyone's journey is different, and it's all about finding our own way. It can be different things for everyone, you just need to figure out what is it that you need to feel good.

Failure isn't the opposite of success; it's a part leading up to it.

Here are some lessons and tips I gleaned from my personal experiences which maybe helpful to your journey:

1. **Accept Your Feelings:** It's okay to feel overwhelmed or lost at times. These feelings are a part of the journey, not a sign that you're failing. It takes time to figure things out in a new place.
2. **Reach Out:** Whether it's to family, new friends, or Seneca's support services, don't isolate yourself. Talk about your feelings and challenges and seek advice and support.
3. **Explore Your Surroundings:** Toronto is a diverse city with a lot to offer. Visit local cafes, parks, or cultural events. It might help you feel more connected and less homesick. See what the city has to offer!
4. **Join Clubs and Groups:** Seneca has various student clubs. They can be a great way to make friends, learn new things, and get involved in campus life. There are always so many events happening for you, so check them out!
5. **Set Realistic Expectations:** While it's good to aim high, it's also crucial to understand that adapting to a new environment takes time. It's okay to take things slow and prioritize your well-being. Know that don't have to master everything immediately. Whether it's academics, work, or daily chores, set achievable goals for yourself. Give yourself some leeway and set realistic time goals.
6. **Celebrate Small Wins:** Did you finally make a dish that tastes right? Or perhaps you scored well in a tough assignment? Celebrate these small moments. They are signs of your growth.
7. **Learn from Every Experience:** Every challenge you face is a learning opportunity. Take notes, reflect, and adapt. It's all a part of personal growth.
8. **Connect with Fellow Students:** Sharing experiences, especially with fellow international students, can be therapeutic. You realize you're not alone in your journey.

Form study groups, join clubs, and participate in college events.

9. **Remember Your Purpose:** On tough days, remind yourself why you started. This can mean very different for every person. Whatever the reason that drove you to start, reflect on that. A few years down the line, you will reminisce fondly on these moments, so make the most of them.
10. **Seek Help When Needed:** We have Peer2Peer Student Lounge at Seneca where you can meet us, your peer wellness ambassadors and talk about anything you want, we are also students and have similar lived experience. Join us to chat with us and grab refreshments on campus. If things get too tough, seek professional help. Seneca offers counselling services for students. Use the support offered to you.

Navigating life is a journey that is filled with all sorts of emotions and is very different for everyone. It's easy to get caught up in minor setbacks. Sometimes, a not-so-great grade or a missed event can seem like you're not doing well. Life gets busy but prioritize your wellness as you cannot navigate through life's challenges without a sound mind and body. Keep pushing forward with the perspective that every experience, good or bad, contributes to the unique and inspiring story you're writing.

Here's to failing, learning, growing, and succeeding – together. Cheers!

Resources:

[Peer2Peer Student Lounge](#)

[Seneca Counselling And Accessible Learning Services](#)



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