

# Learning to fail but not failing to learn: Emotion Regulation and Learning from Academic Failures

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Failures are inevitable in learning processes and may even facilitate learning. Various theoretical approaches emphasize the beneficial role of reflection and self-explanation triggered by failure. However, there are individual differences in learners' tendency to learn from their failures. A large body of research on learners' reactions to failure has found various negative emotions are likely to present obstacles to learning. Simply stated, a painful experience of failure may result in disengagement and avoidance. Although negative emotions are likely to appear in responses to failure, research has not explored specific emotion regulation styles as predictors of the tendency to learn following failure. The present research project is anchored in self-determination theory's (SDT) conception of adaptive and maladaptive emotion regulation, differentiating among three general types of regulation: integrative (autonomous) emotion regulation (IER) focuses on emotions as carrying information that is brought to awareness; suppressive (controlled) emotion regulation (SER) focuses on diminishing emotions through avoidance, suppression, or enforced expression; amotivated emotion regulation leaves emotions uncontrolled or dysregulated. We hypothesized that the tendency to avoid negative feelings (SER) may limit the ability to explore and learn from failures because they elicit negative emotions people consistently try to avoid. We also hypothesized that the tendency to take an interest in one's own negative emotions (IER) may be related to the tendency to explore and learn from failures despite the negative emotions they elicit. Finally, we hypothesized that dysregulation may limit the ability to learn from failures because it interferes with goal-directed behavior. To test these claims, we conducted four studies, three among college students and one among adolescents (total N = 1200) in a longitudinal design. I will discuss our

findings and their implications and make suggestions for future research among strangers.