

8 Setbacks That Can Make a Child a Success

Discussion Questions

1. What was your perception of childhood or teen failure before reading this book? Has that perception changed?
2. Reflect on how your parents dealt with your failures or mistakes when you were growing up. Was their approach different from or similar to Michelle Icard's? Discuss.
3. The book suggests a three-step process for getting through, and growing from, failure: Contain, Resolve, Evolve. Why is it important to move through all three steps?
4. Reflect on a specific struggle you've had with your child in the past. At which stage of the three-step process (Contain, Resolve, Evolve) did you get stuck? Is there anything you'd do differently now?
5. Icard lays out some common failure traps: "Thinking you can avoid failure by micromanaging your child; believing your child's failure is particularly rare or shameful; accepting that failure can cause damage without accepting that it can also create space for growth; asserting that kids who fail don't have the right to continue failing." Are there any traps you've repeatedly fallen into in the past? How might you approach things differently now?
6. Icard outlines four responses to perceived threats to your family: fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. Which response do you most identify with? Are there any habitual responses you'd like to flip the script on?
7. Which right from Your Child's Bill of Rights do you think is most important for your child? Is there a right that you struggle with giving your child?
8. Icard says every parent she spoke with said the single most helpful decision they made was to finally share their experience with a few trusted people. "When they stopped hiding the failure was the exact moment they could finally move past the humiliation and uncertainty, begin to feel optimistic again, shed some stress, and start to find the solutions they needed," she writes. Who are the people in your life you trust to discuss your child's setbacks with? Why?
9. Icard asked every parent she interviewed whether, if she could give them a magic wand to wave away their child's failure, they would use it. All but one said they would not erase the failure. Discuss a setback, failure, or rejection you've experienced that you wouldn't want to remove from your life—despite the pain.
10. The book ends with a list of nice things to do for a parent whose child is struggling. Can you think of anything else to add to this list?

