



CAREER SETBACKS CAN BE A CHANCE FOR GROWTH

BY GRETA DAVIS

In career slumps, people often experience stagnation, rejection, and decline in opportunities. Sometimes, this challenge arrives, like a fierce winter storm, with some kind of career setback, failure, embarrassment, or unplanned job loss. At other times, the problem creeps in slowly with a gradual loss of confidence or deterioration in skills.

No matter how career slumps arrive, they're usually involuntary, painful, and leave one feeling stuck. During such a season of trial, it's normal to feel defensive, disheartened, or unsure about the future.

According to *Harvard Business Review*, high achievers often take too much credit for their successes while also looking to external circumstances to explain failures, which is a type of attribution bias that hampers growth. Those who rebound from career setbacks manage their initial denial, shock, and loss, but then move into honest reflection about what went wrong and how they contributed to the problem. They also consider what they can do differently in the future.

Navigating a career setback involves getting some distance, honest internal reflection, and taking actions to recover, setting the stage for new growth and opportunities. Here are some tips:

REST. Pulling back from the storm and disconnecting gives the mind a break, helps reduce automatic defensiveness, and promotes deeper reflection and growth. Many great insights have emerged during moments of quiet when the mind is allowed to rest. Quality rest rejuvenates the immune system, enhances cognitive functions, and contributes to emotional well-being.

ENGAGE IN SELF-REFLECTION: Once rested, consider what contributed to the career setback. Those who rebound well from career mistakes are willing to examine their role and contributions to the problem while acknowledging any external factors or difficult circumstances. Explore and contemplate what one could do differently next time if given the chance, and identify areas of improvement.

SEEK SUPPORT: Talk to mentors, career counselors, or friends who can serve as a sounding board or provide new perspectives, understanding, and encouragement. This is an important way to manage the stress of career difficulties. Those who recover well from career setbacks use these conversations to move beyond commiseration to a willingness to receive honest input.

CONSIDER A CHANGE. Depending on the circumstances, you may need to explore other options, such as moving to a different role, changing companies, or shifting

to another industry. Sometimes, a change in direction can lead to career recovery and greater satisfaction.

UPSKILL. Leverage insights gained from reflection and your social support system to focus on acquiring new skills or updating existing ones. This can enhance your marketability and open up new career opportunities.

SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS. Break down your long-term aspirations into smaller, manageable goals. Achieving these milestones can help you rebuild confidence and regain a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

NETWORK. Expand your professional network by attending events, workshops, or networking sessions. Often, new opportunities arise from unexpected connections.

Every experience, including mistakes and failures, can contribute to your personal and professional growth. It's essential to remember that seasons are temporary, and just as winter eventually gives way to spring, career and personal setbacks can lead to new opportunities and growth.



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