STAR Series

For Congregational Leaders

EMBRACING FAILURE

TASK: James Dyson created 5,126 failed vacuum prototypes before his breakthrough success. Edison needed 1,000 attempts to perfect the lightbulb. Their stories remind us that failure isn't a dead end but rather the process that illuminates our path forward. For congregational leaders working with young adults, **embracing failure** isn't just helpful; it's essential for building authentic, growth-oriented communities.

The 5,127th Prototype: Why Failure Fuels Young Adult Ministry

1 FAILURE CLARIFIES PURPOSE

Howard Thurman, a brilliant preacher and theologian, faced repeated rejection from ministry roles due to segregation and systemic barriers. What could have ended his pastoral dreams became a redirection. He leaned into writing, teaching, and mentoring, ultimately shaping an entire generation of faith leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. Help young adults see failure as feedback by asking, "What did this teach you about what matters most to you?" Encourage journaling after projects to help them notice patterns in their passions and calling. Frame reflection not around what went wrong, but around what became clearer.

2 FAILURE BUILDS AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

Jon Acuff blogged for years with little traction before becoming a bestselling author. Instead of hiding those struggles, he shares them openly and with humor. People connect to his honesty about failure more than his polished wins. When leaders are only seen as perfect, young adults can't relate. Model vulnerability by creating a "leader blooper reel" where you share programs that flopped or ideas that didn't land. Start meetings with brief stories of personal setbacks and what you learned. This normalizes talking about mistakes and makes failure feel human and safe.

3 FAILURE STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY

Before becoming "Queen Bey," Beyoncé's group Girl's Tyme lost badly on Star Search. She didn't bounce back alone but leaned on family, teammates, and collaborators. When young adults take risks that don't work out, our response matters. Ask, "What did you learn? What's the next step?" Create "celebration of attempts" moments that spotlight new ideas people tried, regardless of results. Pair young adults as "reflection buddies" to process setbacks together, building accountability and shared growth.

When we allow failure to reveal calling, build empathy, and invite community, we create space for real growth. That kind of church isn't just safe; it's a launching pad.



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ROADMAP

Curriculum Domain, Competency and Task Constellations

STAR Domain:	Listening
Associated Competency:	Relationship building and Compassion
Associated Task:	Equanimity

STAR Domain:	Young Adult Leadership
Associated Competency:	Resourcefulness and Communication
Associated Task:	Recruiting

STAR Domain:	Faith Journey
Associated Competency:	Creating Trust
Associated Task:	Spiritual formation

STAR Domain:	Culture
Associated Competency:	Adaptability
Associated Task:	**Embracing failure**

STAR Domain:	Intergenerational Connections
Associated Competency:	Mentorship
Associated Task:	Generational literacy and Digital literacy

STAR Domain:	Community
Associated Competency:	Authenticity and Inclusivity
Associated Task:	Managing conflict

STAR Domain:	Church Leadership
Associated Competency:	Influence and Purpose
Associated Task:	Creating buy-in

STAR Domain:	Frameworks, Programs, & Events
Associated Competency:	Learning
Associated Task:	Sticky programs and Measure and assess