

WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*[™]

Fear of failure is such a real thing when you're running a business, isn't it? So many of us, we spend hours obsessing over failure before it even happens. We can give it control over us to the point where, gosh, we don't even want to try something. We can get consumed with, "What if? What if this doesn't go well? What if people think poorly of me? What if they laugh at me or talk about me behind my back?" It just feels bad to feel bad. It feels bad to feel embarrassed or ashamed. So again, we avoid even putting ourselves out there.

If you've tried something, anything in your business and failed, it doesn't even matter if you're just guessing because I'm pretty sure you're completely beating yourself up, which then of course leads to more fear and paralysis by analysis and you get stuck. Fear of failure is a real thing, friend, but there's something you've probably never been told about failure. So listen up if this particular F-word has been tripping you up.

The real question is, how are portrait photographers like us able to run a profitable business and still put our families first without selling digital files for cheap and working all the time? I'm Sarah Petty, your host of the Worth Every Penny Joy Cast, and I went from a stressed out, overworked mama with three babies to being named one of America's most profitable photographers without working my kids' lives away.

Each week, I'll show you how to find and serve boutique portrait photography clients in a world where we compete with free thanks to everyone having a digital camera in their pocket. Take the first step to adding more joy and profit to your life by downloading your free photography business tools at joyofmarketing.com/podcast.

It's not your fault, seriously. You've gotten stuck in the trap so many of us get stuck in, the fear of failing and the pain from past failures keeps us from doing. It keeps us in Stuckville. It makes us paralyzed because we're so afraid of failing again.

Remember, I think your subconscious is like a self-driving Tesla. It records everything you do. It records all the mean looks you're given and the rolled eyes and the bullies out in the world who want to pull you down. So then when you have an opportunity, your self-driving Tesla grabs the wheel and it says, "Oh my gosh, this could create pain for you," and it pulls over

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or it stops you, literally stopping you from moving forward and it tells you, "You're not going anywhere," and it parks that fancy car of yours. No. I want you at the wheel of your own vehicle.

I want to share a story about why I love failure and how I truly believe it serves us. My oldest daughter, when she turned 16, had a doctor's appointment. It was physical therapy or something that she did. She was a runner and she would go by herself and she was coming home and she realized she was out of gas, so she ran by the gas station on her way back to school to fill up with gas. And she was 16. She had always been taught how to get her own gas, but she was alone and she was, I think, a little nervous about doing it herself and in a hurry to get back to school and some man looked at her. Of course, she said, "Some creepy man looked at me." I'm sure he just glanced her way. So she pulled the gas pump out of the car, and literally, I think she turned it on herself and just sprayed her whole body for 10 seconds because she got gas all over her entire body. And she put the pump away, got in her car and drove home.

Luckily, I was working from home that morning and I hadn't left and she came in and she was horrified. She was so afraid I was going to scream at her and she told me what she did and I thought it was kind of funny because she was going to have to suffer the whole day, right? I said, "Look, I'm not mad. Go in the laundry room. Strip down. Don't take this gassy outfit upstairs. Strip down and go hop in the shower and scrub your body," because she stunk all over like gasoline. I put her laundry in the laundry and good Lord, it took us like a week of washing her clothes with vinegar, with everything to get that gas smell out and her body, same thing.

And it's funny. Looking back, I'm kind of surprised I didn't get mad. I tend to get mad at stupid things, like people leaving wet towels on the wood railing. But when it comes to things like this, I felt like, "Okay, this is a great opportunity to help her see that it's okay to fail," because I do this for a living with photographers every day and I see these adult photographers who are petrified of moving forward because of some mistake they made when they were a kid, often.

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Here I have this 16 year old with such a beautiful lesson. I could have told her not to do that. I could have yelled at her, but her punishment of having to smell like gas was sort of poetic justice, I felt like. And here's the thing she moved on. She didn't die. She was completely fine. She isn't afraid to get gas again, but you know what? She will never, ever pull the pump out of the car without releasing the trigger first, ever. She'll never do that again. And when you raise kids, you can't possibly think of all the things that they're going to do wrong. In a million years, I could have made a list of things I didn't want my kids to do wrong and I would never have thought of that one. Now you guys have that if your kids are under 16, you can share that story with them and they'll find something else to fail at.

But I explained to her that this was great. This is how we learn, right, that she won't do this again, and I don't want her to be afraid to do these things, and I was actually kind of proud of myself for that parenting moment because it's so easy to just snap, right? Because we were taught that, too. Failure's bad. You're a bad person. How did you do that? Even if we would have had to throw her nice clothes away ... they were some of her favorites ... it just is part of what we do and we move on. They're just a thing.

And I wish more people would encourage their kids to fail, and I hope you encourage your kids to fail and I wish your parents would have encouraged you to fail more, because this is how we learn. Failure creates sort of an internal dialogue when we're kids that we're not good enough and we're bad at things instead of saying, "Oh, that's not a good outcome. I'm not going to do that again and spray myself with gasoline."

Look, we failed when we learned to walk, when we learned to ride a bike, when we started talking. Everything we've done, we failed before we got good at it. Should've seen me play in volleyball. I don't even know how I kept going. I can't imagine how terrible I was. Everybody is when they start learning a sport. We have to fail. And the thing is, I want you to see that not only are you going to fail, right, but you have to fail, because if you are stuck and you're not putting yourself out there, you're failing yourself by not putting your best self into

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the world. It's not because you were a bad business owner or you messed up someone's photos. It's because you're depriving the world of your awesomeness.

Today's about failing. I want to share with you three ways to get better at failing. And I'm always trying to get better, too. I love doing this joy cast because it helps me pay attention to, "Okay, you failed this week, Sarah, and you're okay. You're going to make a better process because of it." So don't think I have all these answers. I just know that this is one of the reasons I love teaching and coaching photographers because the more I do it, the more I can get comfortable with it and the more I can get you guys comfortable with it.

Number one, reposition how you look at failure. Failure's learning. This is a core value in my community of photographers at The Joy of Marketing, and it has to be because every successful business person out there is where they are because they failed. Bill Gates quit college. He failed completely at his first business and he learned lessons that helped him later. Think about how your life would be if he hadn't gotten back up and gone back out there, gotten up to the plate to bat again. Our lives would be completely different.

In my photography business, my selling system serves my clients in such an amazing way because I failed a lot. Every time I lost an order, every time I said something stupid, every time I forgot something that was important to do, I felt like I failed my clients. I went home with this sick feeling in my stomach. I had a stomach ache. I would wake up at night. I would wake up in the morning with like, "I should have said this. I should have done this," and instead of locking up and saying, "I shouldn't do this, I can't do this," I used it to motivate myself to go make the system better because I was so passionate about helping people have photos. I would add a step. I would change a step. I would do something differently to make sure it didn't happen again.

I just kept thinking of all the clients in my studio that I serve. I was creating art that gives them hope, that helped them celebrate what was imperfectly perfect about their families. I would help inspire and empower young teenage girls and women who were feeling bad about themselves or coming out of an abusive relationship or an abusive family. I was helping people

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who adopted children help those adopted children see that they visually are as much a part of the family as everyone feels, but they can see it. I'm helping blended families heal by having that family portrait over the mantle and people whose pets are aging and they know they're not going to have them forever, I help them celebrate the love of that little pet with artwork for their home. That's what helped me see, "Okay. I know I'm not going to be perfect. Let me make this system better," because I kept focusing on the people I was helping and not on me and my failures. First, reposition how you look at failure. It's not about you. It's about the people you're not helping if you don't keep failing.

Number two, remind yourself, and you might want to write this one down, there is no such thing as a portrait emergency. If we mess up, nobody's going to die on the operating table like doctors, right? If your portraits are terrible, you reshoot. If you mess something up, you fix it. If you miss a deadline, you apologize. Now, wedding photographers, little ampersand there, you're a little different because you can't reshoot. But for portrait photographers, guys, at the end of the day, nobody's going to die because of a mistake you made.

Sooner or later, you're going to lose a client. You're going to lose money. You're going to have someone unhappy with you. Those things are going to happen, but those happen in life too. And like life, all you do is your best. You can apologize. You can work to fix it. You'll add a process to your system where you can make it up to people. And at the end of the day, you've done everything you can and you know you're a good person.

And if someone's going to forever bad mouth you or hate you because of a mistake you made as a photographer that you took responsibility for and you owned it and you did your best to fix it, they're not even a client you want, period. And typically, those are the people who go around bad mouthing everyone, and nobody listens to them anyway. Think about those people in your life. You know who they are. It's true. There's no such thing as a portrait emergency.

Number three, celebrate your failures. Celebrate them. Look, shame and guilt and all those yucky feelings that we hate when we fail, they can't live in the light, right? Shine light on

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them. And don't hide those failures. If you hide your failures, that's what builds up the head trash. Look, I had to refund a \$6,000 order that was paid in full to a studio client back in the transition to digital because I didn't know how to use my digital camera. I wasn't a techie. I looked at the back and I was like, "Oh, the image is there," not knowing what even a histogram was, not that I'm sure I even really know, and when they came back, they were not saveable. They were not printable.

It was three little boys and the stepdaughter lived out of state, so there was no way to reshoot. I did everything I could. I apologized, and they were fairly nice, but they were like, "Yeah, I mean, she's gone. She's gone for like a year or two." She hardly ever came back," and so needless to say, I lost that client. Nobody yelled or screamed at me, but I had to give \$6,000 back. It wasn't my favorite day.

Another day, I had a client, I made a giant wall portrait for her. She said, "I want it as big as possible," and she gave me the measurements of her fireplace, but I remember thinking, "Okay, this is the biggest we can make the glass and the frame and everything." I just made the biggest possible thing not paying attention to the size that she had available. And she was about an hour and a half away. We had to hire a moving company to get it down to her. And guess what? It was three inches too big for her space. Completely my fault.

And she was so nice. She's like, "I know you'll fix it," so I had to pay a moving company to go back and get it, bring it back to us. I had to pay the framer to chop this expensive frame down, cut new glass, cut new mat, reprint the image, build it all back together, hire a moving company to get it back to her at my cost, right? I had to eat that. This client came back to me for years and has since moved away, but she was a great client and it strengthened our relationship.

I share these stories with you because I want you to see that I'm where I am because I have failed a lot. I'm not running a successful studio because I never had a failure and I'm just this magical person. No, I failed a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot. And I love that I have you that I can openly share my failures with. And they lift me up and it helps me be a better person and fix

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them, right? One client I lost forever and I had to give \$6,000 back and one stayed a client, strengthened our relationship and we moved on. You're probably going to have the same thing happen to you, but I don't want that fear of failure to stop you ever, okay?

If you don't have a community, someone in your back pocket to share your failures with who won't add to your head trash by telling you, "You can't do this. Charge this. Have this type of system," please go listen to episode seven of this podcast called What to Do When Your Family Doesn't Believe in You, where I talk about front pocket and back pocket. It will help you tremendously because we can't hide from our failures. They're going to happen. Celebrate them, shine the light on them and they can't stop you.

I also think that one of the most important reasons we need to have the boutique business model that I talk about in my book, Worth Every Penny, is because we need to have bigger margins to be able to fix things, right? That's why you're learning how to run a profitable business, so you have extra margins, so you can absolutely say, "Yes, I will fix that wall portrait," and you can hire that moving company and all the people it takes for you to fix that problem so that you can thrill your client and know that you can still feed your family. We have to happily be able to refund people if we mess up or if they're not happy. We have to have the time to learn how to do it better and go get the skills we need because we're not shooting 20 shoot and burn sessions a week. We have to have time in our schedule and space with our brains to be able to do the right things and go learn how to fix what we need to fix.

The sooner you fail, the faster you will learn. It really is that simple. Heck, I'd love it if you even shoot me a direct message on Instagram @sarah.petty and tell me what you have failed at, and you know what? I'll send you a positive message back. That's how much I believe this. You can do this. And I believe it to my core because I know from my own many, many, many failures, and from watching my students get comfortable with failing, that the more comfortable you get with failure, the more comfortable you will get with success.

Look, when you start to normalize failure, you will have less head trash about everything, and that feels good. Then when opportunities come up in your life, you can say,

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"Heck yes," instead of living in doubt, or worse, unable to make the decision and living in indecision. That is painful. Look, more money's lost due to indecision than bad decisions and I believe fear of failure is a big contributor to you being stuck.

Do the three things I shared in this podcast and your self-driving Tesla car will no longer be grabbing the wheel. It won't turn you off onto that dead end, "I might fail," road that doesn't go anywhere, but instead you keep the wheel and you stay on the, "Heck yes," road. You're going to hit some bumps. You're going to have some fender benders, but the best part is that even if it's slow, you will be moving toward your best life. That's what we both want for you, isn't it?

Thank you so much for listening. I believe that to change this industry, it takes all of us believing that the true value of what photographers bring to families is more than just a digital file. If you're enjoying this podcast, it would help so much if you could subscribe and leave it a review. This is how we get the word out that we are worth every penny. And I'll see you soon.