

Failure IS an Option in Some Cases

Instead of cringing or quitting, why not embrace the stuff you’ve always wanted to do, even if you’re mediocre?



WORK & LIFE
RACHEL FEINTZEIG

Betsy Purves doesn't really sing anymore. Growing up, the classically trained soprano rehearsed intensely, performing at the Washington National Cathedral and a New York City church. Over time, other things started to fill her life—a career in fundraising for the arts, a husband, two children. Her skills atrophied. Several years ago, Ms. Purves auditioned for a choir, got rejected, and decided she was done.

"I know what it feels like to sing at a very high level and I can't do that anymore," the 36-year-old Washington, D.C., resident says, "so I don't want to do that at all."

She misses it. But even when she's singing her daughter to sleep and hears a flat note, she winces.

"I wish I could just let go," she says.

So many of us are terrible at being terrible. As our children venture off to school, sports, dances and music lessons, we implore them: Just try something, keep practicing, you're only a beginner. And yet, faced with evidence of our own mediocrity, we wilt in embarrassment, avoid the thing or quit altogether.

I heard more profanity while interviewing people for this column, as they detailed their failings, than for a piece I reported about swearing. We really, really do not like being bad at things.

What if we're missing out?

"It's such a relief not to have to be good," says Karen Rinaldi, a Manhattan-based publishing executive and confessed horrible surfer. After 20 years on the board, she is still bad, and she loves it.

There's the thrill of being out on the water, the feeling that any wave she does catch is a bonus. But there's also the satisfaction of not having to be the expert, the freedom to seek help and rely on others in a way she never would at work or with the kids.

Back on land, she says she's more understanding and patient with others' mistakes.

"You realize, wow, they're trying," she says.

Ms. Rinaldi, whose experience led to a book about what you can learn from wiping out, recommends asking yourself, "What is it that you've always wanted to do



or try but were too afraid?" Whatever it is, she says, start doing it. Should you struggle, embrace the fact that you're a beginner.

"Go in there with the humility to say, 'I'm new,'" she says. "People want to help you learn. It makes them feel good."

We used to be better at being lousy. A recent study found that average levels of social perfectionism—the sense that you have to show the world you're flawless—among more than 41,000 college students increased by about a third from 1989 to 2016.

Over time, competition for education and jobs has ramped up, explains Thomas Curran, lead author of the study and professor of psychology and behavioral science at the London School of Econom-

‘It’s such a relief not to have to be good,’ says a confessed horrible surfer of 20 years.

ics and Political Science.

Images of perfection fill our social-media feeds, along with ads assuring us we wouldn't be so deficient if we just bought this thing or tried that product. Parents often add to the pressure, fearing their kids will end up sliding down the socioeconomic ladder.

"The whole fabric of society is held up on that, our sense of inadequacy and being not enough,"

says Dr. Curran.

Two years into running his own business, Elliot Pepper was struggling with some of the basics. The intricacies of tax codes were no problem for the Baltimore-area accountant and financial planner, but he couldn't keep track of client referrals. He forgot to send invoices, never collecting money he'd earned.

At networking events with fellow entrepreneurs, "I'd just be nodding my head, like, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm totally killing it," he says. Admitting that he wasn't good at this stuff felt like acknowledging that he sucked overall.

He finally solved the problem by bringing on a business partner, someone who excels at the details

he doesn't. Fessing up about the problems, and watching his new counterpart fix them, made him realize his fears about being judged were just in his head.

"People don't care that much," he says.

Our own expectations don't help. I started dabbling in yoga this summer, after a running injury sidelined me from my sport of choice.

When I lamented to Syd Schulz, a professional mountain biker, that I was terrible at the poses, cringing each time the instructor walked over to my mat for remedial assistance, her response was, what did you expect?

"It's a little insulting to people who have spent years and years of their lives acquiring skills to think that you should have those overnight," says Ms. Schulz, of Los Alamos, N.M.

The 31-year-old cyclist spent last winter learning a type of Nordic skiing, waddling up hills and attempting to improve her form going downhill.

"We expect linear progress," she says. Years spent working on her cycling have taught her that improvement often comes in halting steps, preceded by long stretches of stagnation or even getting worse.

From the moment Zachary Bouck glimpsed a BMX, or bike motocross, competition on TV as a 14-year-old in North Dakota, he was convinced it was his future.

He spent money from his newspaper-delivery route on a bike designed for BMX tricks and built ramps in his backyard. After high school, he went to Southern California to work and train at a special facility equipped with foam pits and jumps.

He discovered two things. He wasn't good enough to go pro. Nor was he sure he wanted to.

Professional BMX life was less glorious than he imagined, he says. Hanging out with his heroes, he saw how many struggled with money, drugs and injuries.

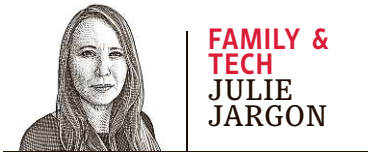
"I could tell already it would not have made me happy," he says.

He left the West Coast, eventually enrolling in college in Colorado and becoming a wealth adviser.

These days, the 39-year-old hits local skate parks with his bike, where grinding a handrail, landing a 360—or not—he feels like a little kid, zen, in the moment. The point is just to be there.

"The benefit of not pushing myself every day," he says, "is that I get to ride every time I want."

Medications Tool Added to Apple App



FAMILY & TECH
JULIE JARGON

With my long list of daily to-dos, I sometimes find it hard to remember to take my multivitamin. Now my phone can remind me.

A skipped vitamin isn't necessarily a big deal, but missed medications can be dangerous. Half of Americans with chronic illnesses stop taking medications within a year of the initial prescription, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One cited reason: forgetfulness.

Apple is the latest company to address the problem, with a new Medications tool in the Health app update that arrives Monday with iOS 16.

The app lets you create a list of your medications and supplements by scanning bottles with your iPhone's camera or by typing the name in a search bar. You can schedule notifications to show up on your iPhone or Apple Watch when it's time to take them. When the alert pops up on your screen, you can indicate whether you've taken or skipped the dose. The tool tracks your medication-taking history. You can also dismiss the notification or be reminded later.

You can share your medication log with family members or caregivers, who can help you keep track (and scold you for skipping). And the tool can even tell you if your medications might not work well together.

The reminder feature marks Apple's latest push into personal-health management, following earlier iPhone or Apple Watch features such as the walking-steadiness score, fall-detection system and notifications for irregular heart rhythm.

A number of other companies have developed automated pill-dispensing devices, pill-pack services and medication-reminder apps, though some have proven difficult for people with dementia to manage without assistance from loved ones.

Some studies have shown that medication-reminder apps lead to better medication adherence. Sometimes people don't take their pills no matter how easy the tech makes it. If you, like me, realize you need a nudge, a tool that's already in your phone is worth a try.

What you'll need

An iPhone 8 or newer model, which must be updated to run iOS 16. (The update should appear under Settings > General > Software Update sometime Monday, according to Apple.) If you also want reminders on your Apple Watch, you'll need an Apple Watch Series 4 or newer running WatchOS 9, also due Monday.

In the Health app on your iPhone (the white square icon with the heart), go to Browse > Medications.

What to do

Once in the Medications app, tap Add Medication. There, you can type the name of your medication in the search bar or scan your pill bottle using your phone's camera. You can indicate the form of medicine—tab-



The iOS 16 update enables reminders and warns of interactions with other drugs.

let or capsule—and the dose. Next, input the days and times you need to take it. Repeat for every medication or supplement you take.

You can customize which notifications you want delivered and where. For example, if you have an Apple Watch running the latest OS, you can choose to receive reminders there—no additional setup needed. You can't, however, set up your medications list on your watch.

What else you get

In addition to reminders, you can log when you take medications. U.S. users will get educational content on the medications they take, including how to pronounce them, what they're for, side effects and possible interactions. If there's a potential conflict between drugs on your list, you'll receive an alert.

When you set up your medications

list, you can choose to indicate if you use alcohol, cannabis or tobacco. (You can turn that off at any time.) If you do, you'll be notified when any of your medications could interact with those substances. This processing happens on the phone itself—not in the cloud—and is determined only with the software, not any sort of human review.

If you learn of any possible drug interactions, talk to your doctor.

You won't receive more than one reminder a day for each dosage, unless you choose to be reminded again.

How to share

To share your medication information with family members or caregivers, you must have an iCloud account with Health turned on—go to Settings, tap on your name, then iCloud, and toggle on Health. You also need to enable two-factor authentication, a way of verifying your identity.

To turn on two-factor authentication on your iPhone, or just check that it's already on, go to Settings, then tap on your name, followed by Password & Security.

Go into the Health app on your phone and tap the Sharing icon at the bottom. Click the blue oval that says "Share with Someone" and, in the search bar, type in their name. (Tip: That person's Apple ID-associated email or phone number must be in your saved contacts.) Next, choose the health data you wish to share—in this case, Medications. Finally, tap Share, then Done.

If you already share other health data with someone via the Health app, you can add the Medications data to that.

The people you share with will be able to see what you're prescribed and what you've acknowledged as having taken. They won't get alerts telling them it's time for you to take your medicine.

How to protect your privacy

All Apple health data is stored and encrypted on the device when locked with a passcode, Touch ID or Face ID.

As long as two-factor authentication is enabled, all data backed up to iCloud is end-to-end encrypted. Apple says this means it can't read or otherwise access the data.

The reminders were designed to be discreet, in case people around you can see them on your screen. When you receive a notification, it will just say that it's time to take your medication—you have to then tap on your watch or go into the app on your phone to see which one.