



# THE LAW OF WASTED EFFORTS

(FAILURE SHOULD DRIVE YOU TO DO MORE, TO  
ACHIEVE MORE AND TO DO BETTER)



**DR. DEBI PRASAD ACHARJYA**  
WELLNESS TRAINER & HYDRATION SPECIALIST

When you start doing something and put in all the efforts that you think are needed to complete that thing, and at some point, you think that you are reaching nowhere. Maybe you are putting all those efforts in the wrong direction. Take a break and contemplate the situation once again and start off freshly with all your energy in a new direction with a changed perspective. Trust me your hard work and all your sincere efforts to pay off in the end.

I would always go back to my motive, consider if there is still a “pay-off.” If the scales do not weigh in the favour of a positive response and there is nothing served by my efforts. I would then divert that energy somewhere more meaningful. Try, retry, and try again and again. It may be that you are putting your effort into the wrong thing, or it may be that you simply failed to achieve what you wanted. If you really want it, redouble your effort, and try again. If you let yourself be put off by the first failure, you are not going to achieve a whole lot in life!

It is easy to write than do. I can tell you from personal experience that it takes a lot of surrounding to put your best effort into something productive next time if you are depressed with the failure of previous task. Nature rewards persistence. Want to see this in action? Keep feeding few birds every day and see how they see you friendly over a few months’ time. Keep smiling towards people around you, no matter how good or bad faces they make, see the good things that comes to you next time.



I cannot tell you what will work for you. You must find what works for you and not even your parents or wife or any friend can do that for you. Whatever you do, fail progressively and not recursively in same problems. Your efforts never go in vain. Maybe the expected results are not achieved. However, your efforts always give you an experience which makes you wiser in the later part of your life. Your effort not yielding the expected output could possibly also mean that you need to put in much more effort or try different approach.

Albert Einstein made a very strong remark when he said that "doing the same thing and expecting a different result is insanity." If you do want a different result, then the only thing that you can do is to change the things that you have been doing thus far. Because that is the only shot you have at finding something different from what you have been finding all this while. Just because there is a flood does not mean farmers stop planting next year. When efforts fail, you must approach the failure from dissection angle and learn to spend the efforts where you are likely to find better results.

In his famous speech, Steve Jobs mentioned that before starting Apple, he took calligraphy classes without any specific purpose in his mind. And ten years later he used that knowledge in making his first Macintosh computer beautiful. He famously said, “I learned about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can’t capture, and I found it fascinating.”

In life, nothing is ever completely wasted because we learn something from everything. If we look back to our school/college education, many things are not applicable in real life. We studied history, mathematics, and literature but most of that knowledge we never used.

Most of the randomly learned knowledge gets internalized subconsciously and we use that indirectly in understanding complex puzzles of life without knowing it. But if any part of knowledge is not directly linked to our goal, then we consider it as waste. In essence, no learning or knowledge goes waste. When I was reading about the “Law of Wasted Efforts,” I found proof that animals and trees are more receptive to this law.





Did you know that lions only succeed in a quarter of their hunting attempts? This means they fail in 75% of their attempts and succeeds in only 25% of them. Despite this small percentage shared by most predators, they do not despair in their pursuit and hunting attempts.

The main reason for this might not be because of hunger, as some may think, but the understanding of the “Law of Wasted Efforts” that is instinctively built into animals and governed by nature.

Half of the eggs of fishes are eaten... half of the baby bears die before puberty... most of the world’s rains fall in oceans... and most of the seeds of the trees are eaten by birds.

Scientists have found that animals, trees, and other forces of nature are more receptive to the “Law of Wasted Efforts.” Only humans think that the lack of success in a few attempts is a failure... but the truth is that we only fail when we “stop trying.”

However, we humans judge things more in terms of success and failure. If we do not get the desired results, we tend to quit. But the truth is that: we fail when we stop trying. In response to a question about his failures, Edison once replied “I have not failed 10,000 times instead I have successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work”. Hence the failure or learning is a matter of perspective.

Success is not to have a life free of pitfalls... but to walk over your mistakes and go beyond every stage where your efforts were wasted looking forward to the next stage.

In the game of Cricket, the bowlers know that they cannot take a wicket off every ball but keep bowling over after over, trying to lure the batsmen into making a mistake.



Muthiah Muralidharan, the Sri Lankan cricketer and one of the greatest bowlers in the history of international cricket, bowled a total of 44,039 balls in the 133 Test matches he played and took 800 wickets, giving him an average of one wicket for every 55 balls.

The interesting thing is that the law of wasted effort and the power of compounding effect both work in tandem. We can re-interpret this phenomenon in the light of the compounding effect too.

Whenever we try to reach our goal that step may not bring the desired result, but one gets one step closer to the desired result i.e., the efforts get accumulated. It can be said that 99% of the effort gets wasted but without that 99%, we cannot get the remaining 1%.

James Clear in his book “Atomic Habits” mentions that a 1% improvement in any aspect of life has been life-changing for many. The idea is to get 1% better every day at something you are working on and eventually it accumulates to make you way better at it in the long run. Slow but steady progress over some time brings monumental changes.

If there is a sentence that summarizes this world, it will simply be: “continue all over again.”

Be Inspired!!

**Dr. Debi Prasad Acharjya**

(Wellness Trainer & Hydration Specialist)





*“The only way to become excellent is to be endlessly fascinated by doing the same thing over and over. You must fall in love with boredom.” ~ James Clear*



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