

FREE RESOURCE — CHURCH STAFF BOOK CLUB

The Failure Loop: Self & Team Tools

Don't just go through failure — grow through it. Two simple 5-step tools built on the same rhythm: Feel → Face → Find → Forward → Form.

Leadership Tool: Self

A simple 5-step tool to get a return on what didn't go well.

Why This Matters

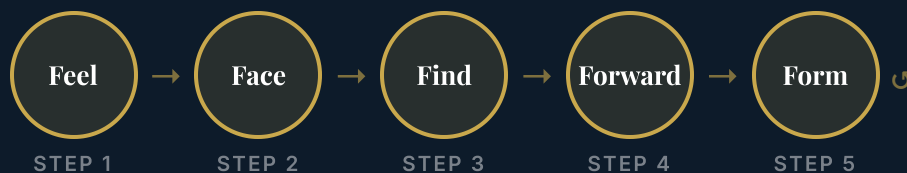
If something didn't go the way you hoped, this tool is for you. All of us have ignored failure, overanalyzed it, or beaten ourselves up over it — and none of those really help.

Failure only becomes valuable when you process it well. Think of failure as an investment in your leadership, which means you owe it to yourself and others to get a return on it. This tool helps you slow down just enough to:

- Learn from what happened
- Take ownership without shame
- Make better decisions next time

KEY IDEA Don't just go through failure. Grow through it.

THE FAILURE DEBRIEF LOOP



A repeatable rhythm you return to every time something doesn't go well.

1

Feel

Acknowledge what happened emotionally

ASK YOURSELF

- What am I feeling right now?
- Why does this bother me?

Reminder: *You can't learn from what you won't feel. It'll be tempting to skip this part — don't.*

2

Face

Tell the truth about what happened

ASK YOURSELF

- What happened?
- What was my role in it?

Reminder: *No spin or excuses. If you soften the truth, you lose the lesson.*

3

Find

Extract the lesson

ASK YOURSELF

- What is this trying to teach me?
- What would I do differently next time?

Reminder: *Failure is only valuable if you learn and apply something.*

4

Forward

Decide your next step

ASK YOURSELF

- What is one change I will make?
- What will I do differently moving forward?

Reminder: *Reflection is not enough — you must adjust. Insight without action is wasted.*

5

Form

Let it shape you

ASK YOURSELF

- How does this change how I lead?
- What habit or mindset needs to shift?

Reminder: *The goal isn't just to learn. It's to become.*

How This Plays Out

Situation: You walk out of a team meeting and you can already feel it — that didn't go well. People were quiet. A couple nodded, but no one really engaged. You hear that a few key leaders are confused about direction. Now you've got a choice: move on... or process it.

FEEL

You pause instead of brushing it off. You notice frustration, a little embarrassment, maybe even some defensiveness.

"That didn't land the way I thought it would."

FACE

You get honest without beating yourself up. You realize:

- You rushed preparation
- You assumed alignment instead of creating it
- You talked more than you listened

No excuses. Just clarity.

FIND

Now you look for the lesson. You also notice a pattern: when you're busy, you default to telling instead of engaging.

"Clarity isn't something I can assume. It's something I must create."

FORWARD

You decide on one clear adjustment. Next meeting:

- You'll define the outcome up front
- You'll ask questions early instead of jumping into content

Simple, specific, and actionable.

FORM

This starts shaping how you lead. Over time you become more intentional, more engaging, and more aware of how your pace affects others. You're not just running better meetings — you're becoming a better leader.

WALK AWAY EMPTY

"That was rough. Moving on."

GET A RETURN

"I processed it — and I'm a sharper leader because I did."

Wrap Up

Failure will cost you something. The question is... will you walk away empty, or will you get a return on it?

ACTION STEP

What's one recent failure you need to walk through this process with?

Leadership Tool: Team

A simple 5-step tool to learn faster together.

Why This Is Important

Healthy teams don't pretend failure didn't happen. They learn from it together. Every team has moments that fall short, miss expectations, create confusion, or simply don't go the way everyone hoped.

What separates healthy teams from unhealthy teams is not perfection. It's the willingness to:

- Tell the truth
- Learn together
- Adjust together
- Move forward together

KEY IDEA The goal is not blame. The goal is growth.

Before You Begin

As the leader, set the tone. Remember — you are a thermostat, not a thermometer. You set the temperature.

"This conversation is not about finding someone to blame. It's about helping us learn and improve together."

THE TEAM FAILURE DEBRIEF LOOP



The same rhythm, walked through out loud — together, as a team.

1

Feel

What did we experience?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

- What was frustrating or disappointing?
- Where did confusion or tension show up?
- What did this feel like for the team?

Reminder: *Healthy teams make space for honesty.*

2

Face

What happened?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

- What went well?
- What didn't go as planned?
- Where did we miss expectations?

Reminder: *Tell the truth without blame or defensiveness. Clarity creates growth.*

3

Find

What is this teaching us?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

- What patterns are we noticing?
- What are we learning about how we work together?
- What would we do differently next time?

Reminder: *Failure only helps if we learn from it.*

4

Forward

What will we change?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

- What is one adjustment we will make moving forward?
- What do we need to stop doing?
- What do we need to start doing?

Reminder: *Reflection matters, and so does action. Insight without action is wasted.*

5

Form

Who are we becoming?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

- What kind of team do we want to become because of this?
- What value or behavior does this reinforce?
- How can this make us stronger long-term?

Reminder: *Healthy teams grow through adversity together.*

How This Plays Out

Situation: Your team launches a big event or initiative. A lot of hard work went into it, but afterward there's frustration — communication gaps, last-minute scrambling, team members unclear on roles, and a sense that people were working hard but not aligned. Instead of avoiding the conversation, the team pauses and processes it together.

FEEL

The team acknowledges the stress, frustration, exhaustion, and disappointment — without blaming.

FACE

The team gets honest:

- Expectations were unclear
- Communication came too late
- Too much responsibility sat on a few people

No defensiveness. Just clarity.

FIND

The lesson becomes clear.

"We don't need more effort. We need better alignment."

FORWARD

The team decides:

- Clarify roles earlier
- Hold one additional planning checkpoint
- Improve communication timelines

Simple. Actionable. Clear.

FORM

Over time, the team becomes more collaborative, more proactive, more honest, and more aligned under pressure. The failure didn't weaken the team — it matured the team.

UNHEALTHY TEAM SAYS

"Let's not bring it up. Just push through."

HEALTHY TEAM SAYS

"Let's process this together — and come out stronger."

Wrap Up

Every team experiences failure. Healthy teams use it to become stronger together. Over time, the willingness to process it well makes a team:

- More collaborative

- More proactive

- More honest

- More aligned under pressure

ACTION STEP

What recent challenge, mistake, or setback would be worth processing together as a team?

"Don't just go through failure —
grow through it."

A free resource from Church Staff Book Club