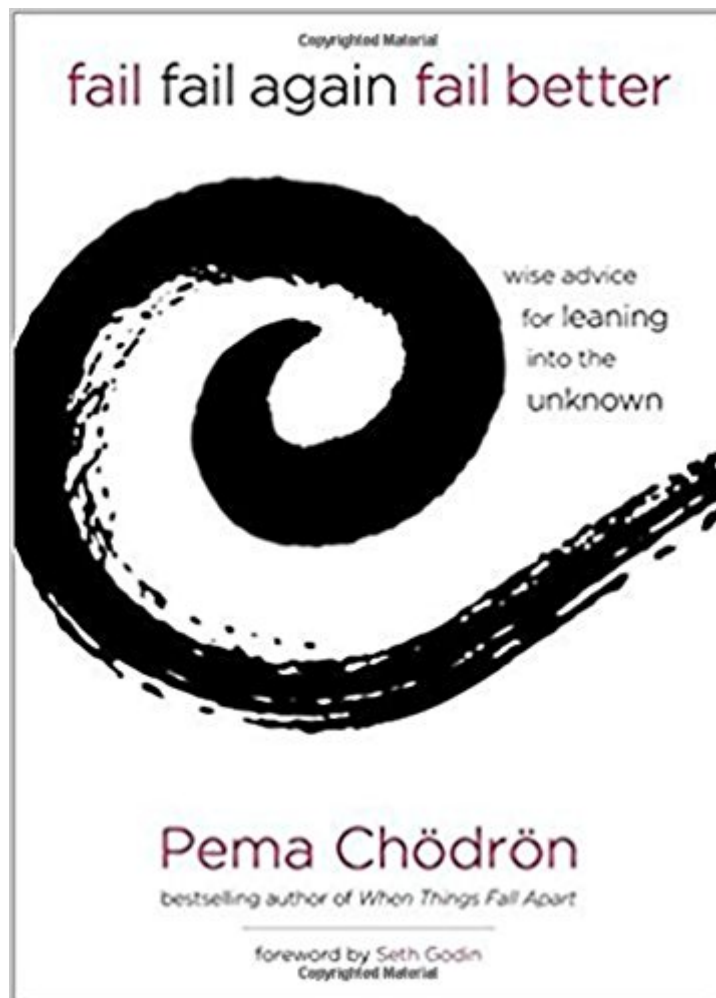




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# Fail, Fail Again, Fail Better: Wise Advice For Leaning Into The Unknown



## Synopsis

When her granddaughter was accepted to Naropa University, the celebrated author Pema Chödrön promised that she'd speak at the commencement ceremony. *Fail, Fail Again, Fail Better* contains the wisdom shared on that day. "What do we do when life doesn't go the way we hoped?" begins Pema Chödrön. "We say, 'Well, it's a failure.' But what if failing wasn't just 'okay,' but the most direct way to becoming a more complete, loving, and fulfilled human being? Through the insights of her own teachers and life journey, Pema Chödrön offers us her heartfelt advice on how to face the unknown in ourselves and in the world and how our missteps can open our eyes to see new possibilities and purpose. For Pema's millions of readers, prospective graduates, or anyone at a life crossroads, this gem of clarity and reassurance is sure to find a welcome place in many a kitchen, office, and backpack.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Chodron is one of the rock stars of contemporary spiritual life. Born Deirdre Blomfield-Brown in New York City, the author converted to Buddhism in her thirties, became a disciple of Chögyam Trungpa, and ultimately the leader of the Boulder Shambhala Center in Colorado. She is also the author of such works as *The Wisdom of No Escape* and *Start From Where You Are*, which brought her a wide, attentive audience. This latest book arose from a request to speak at her granddaughter's commencement. Chodron presents wisdom

inherent in allowing oneself to fail. The text has been enlarged by brushstroke-like artwork, a follow-up interview with Sounds True founder and publisher Tami Simon, and an introduction by entrepreneur Seth Godin. **VERDICT** This brief text has all of the pleasures of a stocking-stuffer but is suitable to other seasons as well and by no means limited in its appeal to followers of Buddhism or recent graduates. **Library Journal** "For Boulder, Colo.-based Naropa University's 2014 commencement ceremony, ChÃ¶drÃ¶n (When Things Fall Apart) told new graduates that "knowing how to fail well" is an essential and neglected life skill. ChÃ¶drÃ¶n, an American Buddhist nun, popular author, and student of the late ChÃ¶gyam Trungpa, urges her audience to hold the "rawness of vulnerability in [your] heart"; rather than blaming self or others. This volume pairs a transcript of the very short speech, accompanied by abstract black and white drawings, with a more substantive interview with her publisher, in which ChÃ¶drÃ¶n talks candidly about her personal experiences with failure and explores self-hatred, human goodness, and fear. She provides insightful suggestions for how to move forward into life despite crushing failure, how to turn regret into empathy and compassion, and how to cope gracefully with a failing body. This small book, an appropriate gift for recent graduates or anyone facing a challenging transition, also contains sustenance for loyal ChÃ¶drÃ¶n fans, and introduces new readers to her gentle wisdom for living in a "world where there are a lot of things that aren't fixable." **Publishers Weekly** "Pema ChÃ¶drÃ¶n promised to speak at her granddaughter's graduation from Naropa University. When asked what her speech would be about, she declined to answer because she had decided to speak to those enthusiastic young graduates about failure. True to her compassionate nature, it turned out to be some of the best advice they would ever receive. She described failing as "getting good at holding the rawness of vulnerability in your heart." She encouraged them to embrace the discomfort of failure rather than blaming others or themselves. She recounted her own painful struggle with turning failure into strength. She suggested that failure is just a shift in the direction of our lives. The last section of the book is a follow-up interview with her which was conducted by Founder & CEO of Sounds True, Tami Simon. During Simon's interview she had the chance to discuss the deeper layers of the ideas she had offered to those young people. ChÃ¶drÃ¶n has a talent for connecting mind to mind through the heart. This book is another beautiful example of her skill." **Anna Jedrzewski, Retailing Insight**

Pema ChÃ¶drÃ¶n Ani Pema ChÃ¶drÃ¶n was born Deirdre Blomfield-Brown in 1936, in

New York City. She attended Miss Porter's School in Connecticut and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. She taught as an elementary school teacher for many years in both New Mexico and California. Pema has two children and three grandchildren. While in her mid-thirties, Ani Pema traveled to the French Alps and encountered Lama Chime Rinpoche, with whom she studied for several years. She became a novice nun in 1974 while studying with Lama Chime in London. His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa came to Scotland at that time, and Ani Pema received her ordination from him. Pema first met her root guru, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, in 1972. Lama Chime encouraged her to work with Rinpoche, and it was with him that she ultimately made her most profound connection, studying with him from 1974 until his death in 1987. At the request of the Sixteenth Karmapa, she received the full bikshuni ordination in the Chinese lineage of Buddhism in 1981 in Hong Kong. Ani Pema served as the director of Karma Dzong in Boulder, Colorado until moving in 1984 to rural Cape Breton, Nova Scotia to be the director of Gampo Abbey. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche gave her explicit instructions on establishing this monastery for western monks and nuns. Ani Pema currently teaches in the United States and Canada and plans for an increased amount of time in solitary retreat under the guidance of Venerable Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche. She is also a student of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the oldest son and lineage holder of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Ani Pema is interested in helping establish Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in the West, as well as continuing her work with western Buddhists of all traditions, sharing ideas and teachings. Her non-profit, The Pema Chödrön Foundation, was set up to assist in this purpose. She has written several books: *The Wisdom of No Escape*, *Start Where You Are*, *When Things Fall Apart*, *The Places that Scare You*, *No Time To Lose*, *Practicing Peace in Times of War*, *How to Meditate*, and *Living Beautifully*. All are available from Shambhala Publications and Sounds True. Seth Godin Seth Godin is the author of *The Icarus Deception*, *Linchpin*, *Tribes*, *Purple Cow*, *The Dip*, and many other industry-changing books on marketing, business, creativity, and meaningful work. He is one of the most widely read blog writers in the world (over a million followers and counting). For more information, search for "Seth" or visit [sethgodin.typepad.com](http://sethgodin.typepad.com).

This wonderful little gem of a book also includes an inspiring and clever foreword by marketing guru and genius Seth Godin. It seems the world at large has also discovered Pema Chodron as one of our most wise and heartfelt teachers. Failure is something everyone recoils from and we've been taught from childhood that success is the opposite of failure and not an option in our system. Pema teaches us to embrace Failure as a spiritual path that leads to future success, equanimity,

open-heartedness, compassion, and love. This is a quick read all should take to heart--it's great accessible dharma for everyone on the path. The interview section of the book with Sounds True publisher Tami Simon and Pema expands on the topic with humor and wit. I also love the quality of this little book. It is illustrated throughout with lovely line drawings and high quality paper and feel. I am getting more copies for gifts for all my friends. Pema Chodron is a wonder and this book captures her spirit and genius in a short accessible edition. A great gateway and primer into her work.

I had a major crisis at work and was ready to quit, my Wife is on her deathbed from cancer. This short meditation (I read it in a single sitting) from Ani Pema has helped me pull out of a major depression and face the problems at hand with grace and peace, to stay with the pain and not be so hard on myself. I don't feel this is overstating things but it saved my life.

Pema's great, of course, and I'd like to think she had little to do with the marketing around this book (and there'd be precious little book left if merchandising / layout decisions were removed). There's little objectionable in terms of actual content (okay, I would differ with Pema's assertion that attention to the value of failure is lacking in current discourse: I'm pretty sure "fail fast" tops the biz-speak cliché charts these days--oh, and her shout-out to Beyonce seemed a bit of a stretch), but true to the product description, the book consists of a very succinct commencement speech with a lot more ink used on full-page stock mandala-esque images than on text. Even at a contemplative pace, I completed the book in under fifteen minutes (including the Forward (sic), which Seth Godin (who also writes better elsewhere) basically phoned in). This would make a decent obligatory graduation gift for the child of someone you don't particularly know or like, but even then another Pema Chodron title would be a better choice.

Oh the places you'll go....on your path! Thank you, Pema, for yet another beautifully and simply worded lesson. I wish I had had Pema speak at my graduation! :) It's been many years since I've graduated but I'm happy to still be learning. Pema's books are all wonderful lessons in being open and present to what is and to being kind yourself. I'm moving into another phase of my life, going through enormous changes that can be awesome, terrifying, funny and full of grace- all at the same time, sometimes. I'm comforted and inspired by and full of gratitude for Pema Chodron. This book about failing can be applied to so many different situations that I recommend it to everyone. I wish you all well.

Upon opening this book I learned that it contained a commencement speech given by Pema to a graduating university class. At first I was a little disappointed because I was expecting more words and less art and white space on the pages. The speech was for the most part quite invigorating and motivating but I was left wanting more. So the second section where Pema is interviewed is where I got more of what I was looking for. The interview in the back of the book is quite inspiring. It was so nice to see this Buddhist Nun give her own examples of failure and how she dealt with these life events that could have brought her down for the rest of her life. The book is a quick or short read and it really left me wanting more which is why I gave it 4 out of 5 stars.

Being a long time fan of Pema Chodron, I decided to try this book. I had a recent failure in my life, and was really looking for guidance on how to proceed. I like that Pema gives an overview of what it means to fail, and gives practical advice on becoming mindful of the failure process. She then lays out an optimistic outlook for anybody who's on the spiritual path, and encourages you to face the fear of failure.

If this were by anyone except Pema Chodron, I would give it one star. She is a wonderful teacher with much to give, and the books she actually puts together, she has a lot to say, even if she can be repetitive. It seems that someone had the idea of getting yet one more Pema Chodron book out of the talk she gave, printed it on nice paper, and overpriced it. The talk is a kind one, with some wisdom, but it is not cogent or well organized, and offers nothing to someone who has any familiarity with her. And if the book is intended for someone who is new to her ideas, another, such as *When Things Fall Apart*, would be a much better choice.

Another great teaching from Pema. I'm a big fan of Tami Simon too. This is just a short book that's been transcribed from an interview, probably with *Sounds True*, but I still enjoyed it.

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