

“Fear of Failure”

by Carol Ann Erhardt

Fear of failure is one of the greatest fears in my life. When I was in elementary school, I didn't like to raise my hand because I didn't want the teachers to choose me to answer a question. I feared giving an incorrect response. I ducked my head and tried to become invisible. Sometimes it worked.

Through the years, I learned that fear can be incapacitating. Being shy, I find it hard to approach people I don't know. For years, I would not go into a restaurant and sit down to eat unless someone I knew came with me. I didn't overcome this fear until I reached mid-thirties. At that time, I faced my fear and entered a fast food restaurant alone, armed with a book to study, ordered food and chose a table near a window. Nothing bad happened to me. Oh, shock! And, I overcame my fear.

When I wrote my first book, I embarked on the journey without fear. Yes, I'd come a long way toward facing my fears by that time. I didn't even fear rejection. Gasp! Then I received my first one. It brought back feelings of insecurity and failure learned during my formative years. I recoiled into my dark cave to lick my wounds. But I didn't stay there long. Everyone experiences rejections throughout their lives. I'd experienced it many times and survived. I would survive this time as well.

After holding my first book in my hand, I thought I had it made. I began a second novel, and when I reached the mid-point, I froze. What I had written—garbage. No one would like it. Why should I continue? I should just trash these pages and start something new. So I did—start something new, not trash what I'd written. A few months later, I returned to the “horrid” manuscript and finished it without looking back. Reading it over from start to finish, I thought “Did I write that? It's good.” So, I submitted and received a second contract. This book required very few edits. Total shock on my part!

Now, I went back to the book I'd already started and worked through to the mid-point, and that dreaded insecurity reared its head again. But I pushed onward and finished the manuscript. Received a third contract, and had very few edits.

By this time, I had begun a fourth book. I loved the characters, thought the plot was good, the writing inferior. I've revised the beginning of this book so many times, I don't even know which one is the one to use. I'm stuck at mid-point, hating the plot line, the sub plots, and I don't even know who the villain is. What is wrong with me? Why can't I finish this book?

I know it's fear of failure. What if I get rejected? What if I get a contract and the book doesn't sell? Yep, fear of failure. I need to pull myself out of the rut and move on. I recognize the problem, and I must take firm steps to resolve it. I wonder how many other writers out there are having a problem with finishing their novel. Are you? Could you also be suffering fear of

failure? If so, I challenge you to face the truth, grab yourself by the shoulders and shake real hard. Then get back to the pages and just “finish the book!”