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VIRTUOSITY

Virtuosity 3: Learning to Fail

CrossFit Auburn teaches a lifelong perfectionist how failure is often the first step toward success.

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Somewhere in my youth, I developed the notion perfection was possible and I could—and should—attain it.

Perhaps it was my Type A parents or the fundamental religion they drilled into me, or maybe I was born that way. Anything worth doing was worth doing perfectly (4.0 GPA), and anything not done perfectly was worth avoiding (sports).

I was paralyzed by perfection, unwilling to take risks and afraid of failure.

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Then one day I took a giant leap and tried a free workout at Auburn CrossFit. I was a middle-aged mom with a muffin top. I could barely run 400 m without peeing my pants, and I thought I'd never figure out the difference between a push press and a push jerk. A few weeks later, I stood in the middle of the box holding 85 lb. over my head and realized for the first time in my life that I had athletic potential. I was hooked. A year later, I was a competitor and a coach.

Fear of failure used to hold me back, but in CrossFit failure propels me toward success. When trying to find a one-rep max, I add weight and lift until I fail. It's only when I cannot lift the bar off the floor or over my head that I know my max.

Inside and outside the box, I no longer strive for perfection. It's unattainable. To achieve success in a workout, in new endeavors, in relationships and in day-to-day living, I do my best until I can do no more. The point at which I fail becomes my goal for the next time. My best continues to get better.

Chasing success is risky business. I will never beat my previous benchmarks if I don't take risks, whether it's stringing more pull-ups together, holding onto the bar for one more thruster or sprinting the last 50 m of a run.

"Do one more rep than you think you can," I tell myself when I think I've reached my limit.

Potential is limitless. Progress is inevitable. Also, muscle-ups are impossible if one doesn't jump up and grab those rings. It's risky, and scary, too, but being at the top of a muscle-up feels like being on top of the world.

I once read that magic happens outside your comfort zone. Though Auburn CrossFit is my home away from home six days a week, I can't say I'm always comfortable there. I sweat, bleed, curse and gasp for breath. I've even cried a few times. I'm often overwhelmed—in the best way possible—by what my body and mind are capable of doing.

CrossFit doesn't require perfection, just that I show up, leave my ego at the door and get down to the hard work of pursuing excellence. I have discovered the magic of my potential, outside my comfort zone and inside a box.



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1. Articles must be original, unpublished works. Authors of selected submissions will be supplied with legal documents to be filled out prior to publication.
2. Articles must be submitted in Word documents attached to an email. Documents should not contain bolding, italics or other formatting. Please submit in Arial font.
3. Articles can be 500 words maximum.
4. Each article must be accompanied by at least one high-resolution photograph to illustrate the story. The photo can feature the coach, the affiliate, the community—anything that illustrates the article. Photo guidelines are as follows:

- A. Photos must be original and owned by the person submitting. Photos taken by others may be submitted provided the owner has given permission.
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Virtuosity@crossfit.com is open for submissions. Tell us why you train where you train, and do it uncommonly well.