

A UNITY PODCAST
LOOKING UP

Discussion Guide: Failing Well

Please use the questions below to guide your discussion after listening to the corresponding episode of Looking Up. The goal of the discussion guides is to build community and support learning about an important topic in women's leadership development. We've included a few suggestions to read further if you want to learn more.

Begin:

Establish norms. Take a moment to affirm the importance of a safe space, explain what that looks like in a group discussion like this, and name other conditions necessary for a comfortable discussion where everyone can contribute with authenticity and vulnerability.

Discuss:

1. What did you think of Reshma's story of a life **"living inside the lines,"** then waking up and making a drastic change? How does the pressure to please others shape women's lives, at work and at home?
2. Have you observed--or experienced--gender differences in how girls and boys are raised? Think about risk taking and failing in particular. How far have we come in this regard, and how far do we have to go?
3. Reshma, Kelly and Rachel discuss how the cost of failure weighs more heavily on women of color than on white women. **"We get stuck in these prisons of expectations and we know that the consequences are far greater when we fail, because all eyes are on us. It's so unfair,"** she says. What can we do to make it possible for all women to feel permission to take risks and fail?
4. Reshma describes sitting with her failures for days, but never celebrating her wins. Do you relate? Why do we do this? Why does celebrating our wins matter? How does it shape our ability to fail?
5. What are some ways that we can **"practice rejection"** and **"practice imperfection?"** How has the pandemic pushed you to manage your expectations of yourself? Have you seen any silver linings to having to do and be less of what you wanted?
6. Do you agree with Reshma's observation that women have difficulty asking for help? What has been your own experience with this? What is something you know you should ask for more help with in your own life? How would it change your life if you did?
7. If you're comfortable sharing, tell the group about a failure you experienced that made you stronger or wiser in some way. How did that experience make you who you are today -- or bring you where you are today -- in a way that nothing else could have

Close: What will you take from this conversation going forward?

Go Further:

Reshma Saujani, [Brave, Not Perfect: How Celebrating Imperfection Helps You Live Your Best, Most Joyful Life](#)