

Ep #29: Why Failure Is Nothing to Fear



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With Your Host

C. René Washington

[Midlife Woman Redefined](#) with C. René Washington

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You want to fly? You've got to give up the shit that weighs you down," Toni Morrison.

Welcome to Midlife Woman Redefined, a podcast for women near retirement who are ready to step into a new chapter of freedom, travel, and fulfillment. If you're ready to focus on figuring out who you are and what you really want, this is the place for you. Here's your host, master certified life coach, travel addict, and midlife maven, René Washington.

Hello, hello, hello. This is C. René Washington. And we are here for another episode of Midlife Woman Redefined. And I am ending the month of January talking about worry and fear of failure.

So, today, I snuck out of the house with my printer. Why did I sneak out? Because I was worried about getting into an argument with my husband. He had gotten us this new printer. And we have this inhouse joke about how terrible I am with technology, electronics. Machines hate me for some reason, I think. I don't know.

But anyway, I had a paper jam. And in clearing the paper jam, I couldn't get the pieces I had taken out – the parts I had taken out to clear it, I couldn't get them to fit back in the doggone printer. And off and on, for two weeks, I kept trying to fix this doggone printer and couldn't fix it.

Why didn't I just ask my husband? Because I didn't want him to tell me, "See, you're always messing stuff up," and all. I didn't want to go through that. So, I just kept trying to fix it and trying to fix it and I couldn't get that thing together.

So then, I got the bright idea, "I could take it to the Geek Squad." Now, I don't know where he got the printer from. I don't know if it came from Best Buy or not, but I figured the Geek Squad works on anything.

So, I drove myself to Best Buy, I took the printer in. You have to make an appointment. The man that made the appointment tried to fix it himself. He couldn't fix it. So, I had to come back. He told me, "You'll have to come back tomorrow."

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I was like, “Dang.” And this is what was also funny. I bagged it up, bagged up the printer to take it out of the house. My husband is sitting in his car in the driveway. So I just have the bag up under my arm like it’s a bag of books or something, put it in the car, go on off to Best Buy. So, then the guy tells me, “You have to come back tomorrow.” I’m like, “Dang, now I’ve got to get it back in the house.”

In the meantime, I run some other errands and I see Office Depot. I take it in there to see if they could possibly fix it. There’s a very helpful woman who looks at it and says, “Well we have this printer. Let me open up the one we have.” And she was able to determine that I had taken out too many parts, of course, and a little plastic piece had broken off and that’s why I couldn’t get it back in.

I was like, “Oh my gosh, really?” So, I said, “Well how much is this printer? Are you sure this is the exact same printer?” She said, “Yes, it’s the same printer, and it happens to be on sale for \$59” So I was like, “Sold.” Because I’m thinking it’s going to be like \$200 or \$300. But no, \$59 is worth my time to not have to come back and deal with this anymore.

I get the new printer, come back home, and now I have – because she told me to keep the old printer until the ink ran out or something. So, I have to get the old printer back in and this new boxed printer. And I just decided on the way home, give up, just go ahead and tell him.

So, I go back in the house. And, of course, he’s there and he immediately starts grilling me. And for those of you who don’t know, my husband is a former federal agent. And so, he is on top of things.

And he said, “What are you doing? What are you hiding? What are you trying to sneak in here?” And so, I go ahead and tell him. And he says, “I don’t know why you were stressed about that. First of all, I don’t need a printer.” And I said, “Well I need a printer,” And he said, and his sister had given him the printer, so it was no big deal. All of that worry for nothing; nothing.

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So, this is how I'm kicking off this show on worry because, as we know, most of the things we worry about are meaningless; a waste of time and our energy to worry about. But we do, right?

And I have gotten so much better with worry because I'm a life coach. This is what I do. And I have taught myself to do the things that keep me moving through worry. It's not even my goal not to worry. I know that it's most of our human nature to worry. And some of us are further down on that continuum than others.

I'm probably between, if we were doing a scale of one to 10 and 10 is you're a total worry wart, I'm probably now around six-ish, because I've done a lot of work. But now, my goal is to, okay, when the worry comes, what's real? What's in my control? What can I actually do? That's how you get yourself out of worry. What can you actually do?

Do the things you can do. If you can't do anything then move on and message yourself into staying in the, "It's out of my control lane," and giving it over. I breathe. Breathing is such a simple tool and such a beneficial tool; to stop and breathe. Because typically, when we worry, we do actually stop breathing. we start rolling through our head at such a fast clip, it really can take our breath away.

Breathe, and then messaging. I am such a huge believer in daily messaging. Every morning, I now wake up and I play this song playlist that I have. These are gospel songs. I love gospel music. These are all gospel songs that speak to everything's going to be alright, how grateful I am, how much I don't have to worry. These are all songs that speak to believing that God is in control.

And it's so helpful for me to start my morning that way because have you ever had the experience of a song getting stuck in your head and you can't get it out? It may even be something that's irritating to you, but you cannot get the song out of your head? Well that's an actual thing.

Scientists have studied that phenomenon and they have termed it as earworms. Not parasites that crawl into your ear, but these are parasitic in

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the sense that they can get lodged in your head and cause what they call a cognitive itch or brain itch. And so you can't get the melody out of your head and your brain is trying to fill it in.

I know most of us have had that experience. And I use that because I believe in the power of repetition. So I use that for my good. And that's why I fill my head with messaging that works for me, not against me. And so yes, those songs that I listen to in the morning, during the day, they just pop into my head. And so, I am repeating good things to myself instead of negative things to myself. So that really helps me a lot with worry.

Then the other side of this is failure. And I wanted to end January talking about this because, again, I want this to be a year of leveling up your life, leveling up your joy, leveling up fun, leveling up pleasure, leveling up your bringing the dreams you have for yourself to fruition.

And a big blocker to that is our fear of making a mistake, our fear of so-called failing. Now, I actually don't believe in failure anymore. Yes, things can go in a different way than we can intend and things can happen differently than we'd like and we call that failure.

For me, it's information. And I am in the midst of reading Brené Brown's wonderful book *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the way we Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. And I want to take a minute to read the beginning of the book.

And she quotes from Theodore Roosevelt's speech, *Citizenship in a Republic*. And it's also tagged as *The Man in The Arena*. Since I speak to women, we're going to call it *The Woman in The Arena*. It was delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, on April 23rd 1910. And this is the passage that's he often references...

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man..." we will say woman, for our purposes, "Who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strived valiantly, who errors, who comes short again and again.

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Because there is no effort without error and shortcoming. But who does actually strive to do the deeds? Who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions? Who spins herself in a worthy cause? Who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement? And who, at the worst, if she fails, at least fails daring greatly?"

And to encapsulate that, it simply means that you're not going to talk about me or judge me or criticize me, and you're not even in this game? You're not in the arena? Who are you to judge me? Yes, maybe it didn't go as I wanted it to. Maybe I royally messed up. But I am in the game.

I am in this game we call life. And that is so powerful for me. And I communicate that in my coaching because if you aren't making mistakes, then you aren't doing anything. And if that's how you want to live your life, fine. But I am here. I am here for us to continuously redefine as often as we choose to, desire to, want to, need to, to keep living in the way that serves us best.

So yes, doing that, you probably will make some mistakes. And so, in this show, I'm going to give you the highlight reel of my low moments.

There's a local event that's really an international organization called F-up Nights. And, at F-up Night, you get up on the stage and you talk about one of your biggest life failures. And you give the details of what happened, and then what you learned from it.

So, I'm going to give you several of mine. And I could probably give you – I know I can – I could give you 100 more. But these are just a few of the things in my life that I was actually ashamed of, I felt like a failure. Some of them, I didn't know if they were recoverable. But here I am.

All the way back to college, the first one I listed was not graduating from college on time. So embarrassed, so ashamed of that for so many years. I felt that I had let my parents down, my family, oh my gosh. I felt so horrible. I was the smart one. I was supposed to do all these great things and I crapped out of college.

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The second one, believing a guy and breaking up with another guy to get back with this lowlife. And why that was such a failure for me is that this was a guy I had dated in college, and then subsequent to my leaving college and moving back home, just out of the blue he reached out to me and went through this thing about how he had assessed his life and realized what a mistake he had made and wanted to get back together.

And I was involved with somebody very seriously. This guy had asked me to marry him. And I'm a one-man woman, we'll say. So, for a month, I was talking to both of them. It was driving me crazy. I could hardly take it.

And I finally made a decision to go back with this other guy that I had dated in college and break up with the guy that I was currently involved with. Mistake. A few months into that – this was a long-distance relationship – he asked me to meet him.

We met in Atlanta. He lived in Tennessee. I was in Alabama. We met in Atlanta at this restaurant, Ruby Tuesdays. I'll never forget it. and he proceeds to tell me that he's getting married to someone else. And I cried all the way home, because who wants to be rejected? And I felt so stupid.

The next one is, in my corporate career, early, I had just become a manger. And a few months into my becoming a manager and managing my first team, long story short, I had to terminate three people from the company. I didn't want to terminate them, but my department manager at the time pretty much put me in a position where it felt like me or them.

And I knew that they should be terminated. I felt so bad about it. It hit the fan, blew up into this big thing. The president of the company found out about it, brought them all back to the company, which I was glad about that. But then, I was told that they would be coming back to report to me. And I was not glad about that. And I did put my foot down about that and that didn't happen. But I felt like I had this huge red X mark on my forehead for a long time.

The next one is getting divorced after 21 years of marriage. I was someone who never saw myself as getting divorced; never. I got married and thought

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that I would be married forever. And it was hugely defeating to me that I could not make that last.

The next one was becoming an entrepreneur and bouncing around buying this program and that business program to try and figure it all out. I wasted a lot of money and felt really dumb about that.

And the last one on my list is compromising a dearly loved friendship by not coming through as promised. I was doing some work, some side work for this woman who is a wonderful person, great friend. And I just started not being able to keep up. You know, I was doing well at first and then she gave me this project and it just didn't go well.

And in all of these things that I've listed – because that one, I felt – well I did. I let her down. I let myself down. And with all of these things that I have listed, even though yes, I felt horrible for different reasons, in each of them, I can go back through this list though and see what I had to learn in each of those situations.

Not graduating from college on time, you know, that putting pressure on yourself to be something that you aren't and to not ask for help. That was my biggest mistake there was not asking for help; learning how to ask for help.

You know, believing the guy, that's part of life. You go through these relationship dramas. But that taught me a lot about rejection and how rejection, I believe, is one of the most difficult things for us to overcome. Even if you don't want the thing, you always want the thing to want you, whether you want it or not.

And that was a powerful lesson for me because it was so best that we did not end up together. That worked out the way it should have and it taught me a lot about myself, as did terminating three people from the company did because that situation taught me what I would and would not do for a job.

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I knew, from that situation, that if I was ever put in a spot like that again, I would say no, whether it meant my getting fired myself or not. It was not worth it to me to compromise my personal values to keep a job.

Getting divorced after 21 years of marriage, I believe that nothing is wasted. I don't regret my first marriage. I don't necessarily – although I do believe in marriage, I now – how can you know yourself in your 20s? I heard somebody say today that your brain is not even fully formed until you're 25. And I got married at 24.

But intuitively, I already knew, I had already always said to myself that I wouldn't even think about getting married until I was 30. And then I got married at 24. And most of the years were good, like I said. I don't regret the marriage. I don't regret that part of my life.

And yes, I guess some people could call that a failure, but my sister married his brother, the two girls that were born from that marriage are my beloved nieces. And maybe that's why we came together, so that they could come together and birth my nieces. I don't know, but I don't regret it.

Wasting a lot of money in my business – yeah, I took the long path to learn how to trust myself. But now, I've got and I follow my North Star. I spend money in my business now on what I actually need and not chasing this next new bright shiny thing. And that's, you know, for all of us in life, to go in. And that's just so huge for me and it's just what I always try to help my clients connect to is go in. Go in. You have your own answer. Then, go out and get what you actually need to help you.

And the compromising the friendship also connects to that. And it connects to me not saying yes to things that I think may be good to go or I ought to do or I should do. I really need to connect to it from an, "I would love to do this, I'm passionate about doing this."

Because, for me, I can no longer – because I did that for so many years in my corporate career, I was able to do really well at work that really didn't feed me. But now, I can't do that anymore. I cannot. It has got to connect to

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what I truly love doing. And I really hate that the friendship had to suffer because of that, but I am grateful for the lesson.

And I am asking you to – yes, I'm sure there are things that you have effed up in your life. We all have. And a girlfriend and I did a really powerful exercise that I got from another coach. We met, and over lunch, we wrote down all of the achievements and things that we were proud of having done in the past year.

And you do it with a partner because we had to come up with a list of 50. And if you do it on your own, you will probably stop it. You might get to 10. But this was a brag list. And we helped each other. We went back and forth. We did like five at a time. And we went back and forth. And we both got to 50 and we were amazed at all of the things that we had gotten done in the past year.

Because it's so easy to focus on what didn't happen, what you didn't do, what you thought would happen. That is so easy to do. It is much harder to connect to the things that you actually have done. We just dismiss those. Stop doing that. Stop doing that.

I have asked you in this podcast, and most episodes, to pause and take a moment to celebrate yourself for something you have done, something that you have achieved. Because the more you do that, the more you build that, that yes I can, yes I have, yes I will muscle, the more confidence you will have in yourself to take that leap.

I had a big revelation. I had a big revelation a couple of weeks ago in reading scripture. There's a scripture that I'm sure, even if you're not a Bible person, you may have just heard this scripture because it's a pretty famous one. It's Isaiah 40:31.

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint.”

And I probably have read that scripture 100 times. But this 101st time, it stuck me, “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will

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soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint.”

And I paid attention to the order of that; soar. You’re flying first, then run, then walk. Now, in my coaching, I talk to clients about taking turtle steps. And I still believe that yes, if you think that it’s too huge, too big for you, take a tiny step and start moving toward it. But what was very interesting to me about that is when you tap into the power source for your life, then you can take the leap and fly.

You don’t have to crawl into it. Leap, fly. And I love that. That is my model for this year. I am coming back to that again and again because I am ready to fly. And those of you who want to fly with me, stay here. Listen to this space because we are going to do the thing.

So, what would you do if you weren’t afraid? What’s worth doing, even if you fail? Are you all in for your life? Pay attention to the nudges. I got that from another coach. Pay attention to the nudges. That is pushing you, moving you to take that leap. Go for it. I talk about living your dream. And be sure that it is your dream. Are you living your dream or someone else’s?

One of my cousins – years ago – she got remarried. She was happily single. Right before she turned 50, she got remarried, and immediately regretted it because her friends had been telling her, “Girl, when you get old, you’re going to be lonely. You’re going to wish you had somebody. You better go ahead and marry that man.”

And she let that get in her head. And she did. And then she was like, “What the hell was I doing? What was I thinking?” And within two years, she was divorced, and she is happy again.

Live your dream. I hear from all of you, I listen to what you say. That grown child still in your pocket or your house, is that your dream? That college degree that you always wanted to go for or just that course you wanted to take or learning how to play the piano, or living in another country? Whatever it is, this is your time. Don’t let worry and fear of failing keep you from living your life and bringing those dreams to fruition.

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Okay, we are at the end, once again. And I hope that you have heard at least one thing that resonated with you. And I'd love to hear that. I'd love to hear about that. Please rate and review the podcast. And if you want any more information about what I do, go to crenecoach.com.

The instructions for rating and reviewing will be in the show notes. And remember, as always, we are midlife mavens, experts on living and living well is our only option.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Midlife Woman Redefined. If you're ready to learn more and reclaim your time, head over to crenecoach.com.