

The Norman Transcript

With You Since the Land Run of 1889

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Author says our failures may teach us more than successes

Authors quickly find a phrase to pen when signing copies of their books. At first glance, Devery Youngblood's "Fail well!" could be taken as a slap. But given the topic of his first book, it fits.

The idea for the book, "Successful Failure," has been parked in his head for years. He's watched — and experienced — personal, corporate and political failures for years. It's what we learn from failure and the changes we make afterward that makes a difference. Writing the book was cathartic.

His basic premise: Americans tend to ignore failure and thus miss out on valuable lessons. Kids

just "reboot" their video games. Adults file bankruptcy. Companies too big to fail are bailed out. Partners move on to the next marriage. Coaches sign on with another team. Husky people find another diet. Politicians gloss over what didn't work and move onto the next hill.

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"Because we don't talk about it, we think we're the only ones that fail," said Youngblood, 51, a native of Laverne, Okla., and an employee of the Chickasaw Nation. "When I started this it became clear very early on that I had to talk about my own failures for the book to work."

Besides his own experi-

ences and that of friends, the book looks at great failures in history. Harry Truman and Abraham Lincoln, for example, failed well before achieving a level of greatness.

"Based on what we know now neither Harry Truman nor Abraham Lincoln could get elected now," Youngblood said. "They were miserable failures early in life."

But they didn't ignore the failures and grew from



Devery Youngblood

their misfortunes, something that doesn't always happen. Most often changes in lifestyles must occur for the failure to teach us anything.

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The self-help culture can be a placebo. Cheering can be good but it overlooks the elephant in the room. We must find ways to rescue ourselves.

"The answer first has to come from within. You have to find out how to deal with the pain and then get over it."

Youngblood, like most men, never talked about his personal failures. "I did hide a lot of my failures with my kids growing up," he said. Some were self-induced,

some from health changes and others just fate.

Women, he said, seem to be better about sharing. Childbirth may be the common bond.

His adult children read the book before it was published. One daughter commented "There was so much about you I didn't know. This explains a lot of things."

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Since the book launched in the past few weeks, friends have started sharing stories of failures. Many are eye-openers.

"I think there are lots of stories out there about people who find ways to be successful after failures," he said.

Devery and his wife, Karen, an educator and trainer and an all-but-named co-author of the book, are looking at ways to take the message on the road. The book can be ordered at www.successfulfailure.net or through Tate Publishing. An audiobook download is included.

They've put on programs for churches and civic groups, playing off their individual skill sets.

"We just think there's a lot of things in the book that we could break apart and use in some training," he said. "There's a lot of material out there."

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