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MBS ([00:00](#)):

Here are two favorite quotes of mine. First, from George Orwell. "Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats." Love that. Here's a second. This is the final lines from Rainier Maria Rilke's poem. In translation, the poem is called The Man Watching. And honestly this is one of my all time favorite poems. And the final three lines go thus, "Winning does not tempt him. His growth is to be the deeply defeated by ever greater things." This sends shivers up my spine. But that's all well and good in theory. But how do you get comfortable with defeat with failure in practice?



MBS ([01:00](#)):

I'm Michael Bungay Stanier and this is 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book. A book that has moved them. A book that has shaped them. Ashley Good has taken on the idea of failure both in theory and in practice. In fact, her bio starts, "Ashley Good is a full-time failure." She is the founder and CEO of Fail Forward, and referenced by Brene Brown for her important work. But where do you start embracing failure? How does that even happen? Well for Ashley, it was about 10 years ago and one of the low points of her life.

Ashley ([01:40](#)):

Fail Forward was born in a pit of despair, to put it bluntly. I was unemployed. I had just been dumped... surprise dumped by a man that I thought was going to propose marriage to me. He did not. He broke up with me instead. I was living back in my parents' basement and wondering what happened to my fabulous, successful life.

MBS ([02:10](#)):

Yeah no kidding. A pit of despair. Ashley would come home from work and just fall on the floor crying. Now, I might still be curled up in a fetal position, but Ashley pulled herself together long enough to go for a walk among strangers. And it turned into a transformational moment.

Ashley ([02:30](#)):

You know those moments... those aha moments that just occur to you? It occurred to me in that moment that those strangers could be feeling as bad or worse than I was. And I would never know. Because we all put ourselves together, we all put on our faces and we go about our work and our days. And I just had this moment. And I remember this one stranger... I still have no idea who they are, but they just passed me. And I just stared at them the whole way



by in awe that they could be feeling as distressed, as low as I was and I'd never know. And I just had this... It was like... you know the story of the Grinch when his heart grew three sizes that day? That's what it felt like. It felt like I could care for that stranger in a way that I'd never been able to before.

MBS ([03:21](#)):

You've probably heard the quote, "Be kind. Everyone's fighting their own battles." Well, that's what this looks like in action. And in that transformative moment, Ashley could begin to pick up the broken pieces of herself and meld them back together. In Japan, there's an art called kintsugi, and I'm almost certainly mispronouncing that so sorry to any native Japanese speakers, where broken pottery is mended using gold mixed with lacquer to fill the cracks.

Ashley ([03:50](#)):

You look at this pottery and it's gorgeous. And you know, you can see that it's more beautiful because it's broken and those cracks are filled in with these gold threads. And I think it's just an incredibly powerful metaphor for what's possible for us as humans too when we're cracked and broken. Sometimes we do stay cracked and broken. That's a reality. But it is always possible to repair with gold and have that moment of becoming more human, more beautiful for having been broken.

MBS ([04:27](#)):

So how does one go from broken to beautiful? What does it take to surrender to a moment like that?

Ashley ([04:34](#)):

That question is probably the question I will always ask... have to ask myself my entire life. And it's an incredibly powerful one. And it's great that you're asking it in this moment too, because I feel like the year that we've just had with the



pandemic is a very similar experience of having to surrender and accept what is thrown at us. And I can tell you I don't know the answer to that question. I didn't know it then, and I am still learning it this year. And I will probably learn it forever because I find it tempting and almost... I tell myself the story that I can control it and I can figure it out because I always have. And we just need to work a little bit harder and we'll pull it out of the wreckage if I could just be a little bit better.

Ashley ([05:43](#)):

And I think surrendering to the things that are out of my control... I mean, there's a wisdom... what they call that the Serenity Prayer? Having the wisdom to know the difference of what's in and out of your control? That's my life-long pursuit or something I'll always have to work on. Yeah.

MBS ([06:03](#)):

Ashley, what do you know about failure now that you didn't know in that moment walking the streets those years ago?

Ashley ([06:13](#)):

I mean, I've learned a lot about failure in a decade of thinking about almost nothing but for my professional life.

MBS ([06:20](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley ([06:21](#)):

Some of the most powerful lessons I've learned have been around how I thought that I had some wisdom to offer the world around failure. If I could just give you a step-by-step process Michael, you would fail well from now on. And I'm going to detail this out with all these lovely stories and workshops and you'd



be fine. And everyone's going to have a healthier relationship with failure. It didn't take very long before I... when I started doing this work that I realized that actually everyone already knows how to fail well. They know the steps that it takes. They know what they should do. They know they should recognize it, and take ownership, and learn from it, and apply that learning, and continue to take bold risks, and make new mistakes the next time. And jump from... what is it? "Failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm," as the quote goes.

Ashley ([07:25](#)):

Everyone knows they should do that. All the motivational posters say that. All the commencement speeches say that, and nobody does it. Myself included. And so I think one of the most powerful learnings I had was realizing that I thought I started this work because I had something to share and then came to the realization that I started this work because I had a lot to learn for myself about why that is so hard, even though we all know we should do it.

MBS ([07:56](#)):

But that is the work you do and how do you represent failure to the people you work with so that they're able to re-engage in it in a way that's not just the, "I know this in theory but in practice I'm just going to be in denial about it."?

Ashley ([08:22](#)):

Oh gosh. There's so many answers to that question. So I'd say the first thing... Maybe it's another thing I've learned over the 10 years of thinking about failure is that there's no such thing as failure. Which is ironic for the woman who has fail in the title of my company to not believe in failure [crosstalk 00:08:41]. But something else I have learned is that truly there isn't. There's just events. And we label things successes or failure, but everything we do has elements of both and those labels will change over time depending on who you're talking to, how we interpret them, how we grow or don't grow from them, how we feel about



them, how others treat us because of those. There's just... there's no solid definition of a failure that I can get behind anymore. I just don't believe in it as an experience anymore. And very... just to put it tangibly, the... even our worst screw-ups there are things that we can take away. Our worst moments that... Coming home crying, falling apart on the floor every night led to such a creative time for me.

Ashley ([09:38](#)):

Same with this last year of COVID. I hated every minute of it. And yet, this has been a year of incredible creativity that I didn't know I had inside of me. So there's... Yeah, even our worst moments have those glimmers of what comes next. So how do I talk about this with clients? I mean, when I step into that room knowing that. Knowing that failure has the power to transform us, but also with an incredible empathy for how hard that is. You talked a little bit about defensiveness and wanting to fight against dealing with it. That's everybody. We all feel shame around our failures that triggers our defensive reasoning. So I guess appreciation for where folks are at in that journey, and almost... Maybe my gift... I don't know if I can call it that, but that thing that you have to offer the world is potentially being able to have those conversations with a deep kindness and appreciation for wherever that person is at in that difficult journey and allow them to see that they can see it anew.

Ashley ([10:59](#)):

That that's possible. That it might not feel like it in that moment, that they can transform from it and come out wiser or more beautiful, as the Japanese pottery tells us is possible. But [crosstalk 00:11:13] that I always know that's possible might be helpful.

MBS ([11:15](#)):

Veined with gold.



Ashley ([11:16](#)):

Yeah. Exactly.

MBS ([11:18](#)):

Yeah. That's wonderful. And what you're saying reminds me of some of the stuff that Brene Brown talks about. And I know that you're actually quoted by her in one of her books at least. So it's a great connection.

Ashley ([11:32](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

MBS ([11:32](#)):

Ashley tell us about the book that you've chosen to read for us.

Ashley ([11:37](#)):

I'm so excited to bring this one to the podcast. It is called-

MBS ([11:42](#)):

Me too.

Ashley ([11:43](#)):

...The Rise by-

MBS ([11:46](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley ([11:46](#)):

Dr. Sarah Lewis. The Rise: Creativity, the Gift of Failure, and the Search for Mastery. So as you might imagine, I read a lot of books about failure. Most of them are the book that I would write about failure, the how-to manual to this as



well. Sarah Lewis's book is an exploration. She describes it in the pages I'm going to read, so I won't ruin the surprise. But she brings in everything from arctic explorers, to artists, jazz musicians, to sports stars... just all of these stories makes failure poetic, which is why I chose it because that's where I'm at right now.

MBS ([12:35](#)):

I love that. Hey where did you... How did you come across this book? I mean, is it just part of your regular radar on books on failure? Or do they come into your life a different way?

Ashley ([12:43](#)):

It wasn't. She was writing this book right around... in the first year or two that I started my company. And she came across my work and reached out to interview me. So I actually came to Toronto and I spent this day with Sarah. And I can tell you still it is my... the best professional day of my life that I spent with this woman. She is just... You know those people that just have this... How do I even describe it? An energy about them? I don't know if that's the right word. But she... it's like you're in the room with royalty. And I just glowed the entire day in conversation with her. I can't tell you how wonderful it was. I was the first to get a copy when the book came out.

MBS ([13:41](#)):

What a fantastic story. What was it on that day that... What shifted for you in that day?

Ashley ([13:54](#)):

I think a couple of things. Up until that point... this is 2011, 2012... I felt like I was this lone failure warrior thinking about this topic as much as I was. To have this woman swoop in with all of this insight, and depth and caring for a topic that up



until that point I'd felt alone in being obsessed with. I think that had a part of it. I think she also just has a gift of... I think it's really easy to talk about failure and sound like a motivational poster, and have everyone like, "Ugh. That's a little too much for me." And instead she talks about it in this artful way of... It really does sound... It makes it feel like poetry when you think about... when she talks about failure. And I think that's why I love it. It has so much inspiration in it.

MBS ([14:53](#)):

And this is... she's now a historian and curator by trade, so it feels like she's bringing all of that background into this poetic exploration. So what pages did you pick for us?

Ashley ([15:07](#)):

It's right off the bat. It's the first chapter that describes what the book is about. But it-

MBS ([15:14](#)):

Brilliant.

Ashley ([15:14](#)):

It struck me and told me it was a different kind of book about failure.

MBS ([15:20](#)):

So Ashley Good reading from Sarah Lewis's book, *The Rise: Creativity, the Gift of Failure, and the Search for Mastery*. Over to you Ashley.

Ashley ([15:35](#)):

"This book rarely uses the word failure. Though it is at the heart of its subject, the word failure is imperfect. Once we begin to transform it, it ceases to be that any longer. The term is always slipping off the edges of our vision, not simply



because it's hard to see without wincing, but because once we are ready to talk about it we often call the event something else: a learning experience, a trial, a reinvention. No longer the static concept of failure. The word was, after all, not designed for us but to assess credit worthiness in the 19th century. A term for bankruptcy, a seeming dead-end, forced to fit human worth.

Ashley ([16:21](#)):

Perhaps a 19th century synonym comes closer. Blankness. A poetic term for the wiping clean that this experience can provide. It hints too at the limitlessness that often comes next. Trying to find a precise word to describe the dynamic is fleeting like attempting to locate francium, an alkaline metal measured by never isolated in any weighted quantity or seen in a way that the eye can detect. One of the most unstable, enigmatic elements on earth. No one knows what it looks like in an appreciable form, but there it is. Scattered throughout ores in the earth's crust.

Ashley ([17:03](#)):

Many of us have a similar sense that these implausible rises must be possible, but the stories tend to stay strewn throughout our lives, never coalescing into a single dynamic concept. As it is with an archer's target panic, an experience widely felt but not often glimpsed, the phenomenon remains hidden and little discussed. Partial ideas do exist: resilience, reinvention and grit. But there's no one word to describe the passing yet vital constant truth that just when it looks like winter, it is spring. These chapters form the biography of an idea that exists without a current definition. When we don't have a word for an inherently fleeting idea, we speak about it differently if at all.

Ashley ([17:55](#)):

There are all sorts of generative circumstances: flops, folds, wipe-outs, and hiccups. Yet, the dynamism it inspires is eternal, personal, and often invisible. As



the legendary playwright, Christopher Fry reminds us, 'Who apart from ourselves can see any difference between our victories and our defeats?' It is a cliché to say simply that we learn the most from failure. It is also not exactly true. Transformation comes from how we choose to speak about it in the context of story, whether self-stated or aloud. On that cold day in May, I watched the Columbia archers and saw why errorless learning does not lead to certain wins.

Ashley ([18:46](#)):

Some archers spend months practicing rhythmic breathing to release an arrow at the rests between their heartbeats, miming the motions, training their bodies to have impeccable bone alignment and scapula motion. They start by using their hand and an elastic band at very close range on a target with an extremely large face. Their aim has to be nearly flawless before they can move the target farther and farther back. Yet triumph means dealing with the archer's paradox. Handling what lies out of our control: wind, weather, and the inevitably unpredictable movements in life.

Ashley ([19:23](#)):

Hitting gold means learning to account for the curve embedded in our aim. This book is not an Ariadne's thread, not a string that prescribes how to wind our way through difficult circumstances. It is an exploration, an atlas of stories about our human capacity, a narrative-driven investigation of facts we sensed long before science confirmed them. The many who appear on these pages gave me their trust to present their journeys and offered me a critical reminder, one that created the unintended thesis of this book. It is the creative process what drives invention, discovery and culture. That reminds us of how to nimbly convert so-called failure into an irreplaceable advantage.



Ashley ([20:14](#)):

It is an idea once no one lived out, taken for granted, and now I hope no longer forgotten."

Ashley ([20:35](#)):

Thank you Sarah Lewis.

MBS ([20:37](#)):

That's fantastic, wasn't it? Thank you Sarah Lewis. That was beautiful. Even in two pages there's 83 ideas and 62 poetical allusions and metaphors and stories wrapped up to it. It's an [crosstalk 00:20:47] extraordinary couple of pages.

Ashley ([20:47](#)):

And every page is like that. I can't tell you how many things I had to look up.

MBS ([20:55](#)):

Right.

Ashley ([20:55](#)):

Who's that artist? [crosstalk 00:20:57] What's that story?

MBS ([20:58](#)):

Just to go and google... Yeah. That's fantastic. I was struck by so much there, but the cyclical nature of it. Just when you think it's winter, then it... spring is there. In Toronto, we're just there. Spring is just showing up after a longish winter. And I was really... had a bolt of lightening around... the language we put around something is everything. And I realize one of the accidental secrets to my success, because it's been, is this relentless reframing of stuff to make it a success. I mean, my parents... I'm actually staying with my parents in Canberra at the moment. And they were always bemused by my life. Because they're like,



"We keep waiting for Michael to fall in a pile of shit. And he keeps doing random things. But he always seems to pop up, going, 'Ta-Da,' and holding daisies."

MBS ([22:03](#)):

And I think that's in part just because a bunch of good luck along the way. But there's a degree to which I've just had a wiring that's always made me go, "I'm just going to explain how this other failure is actually part of my glorious plan for triumph." And it's been a very liberating ability to do that. In those two pages, what's at the heart? What's the gem at the heart of those two pages for you, Ashley?

Ashley ([22:30](#)):

It is that transformational quality of failure that her language just creates this beautiful imagery for, that I hadn't quite... And she talks about it as this fleeting.... just when it looks like winter it's spring. That the word we have is so imperfect and does describe that dead end. And that's how we end to think about failure. I'm a failure. I failed. That is finite. That is who I am. It's definitive. And instead, she brings out all this imagery around how we need language for how that is not true to the human experience. That it's more of that blankness, that wiping clean. And I especially loved "the limitlessness that can follow." Because I think it's really easy to forget that part of it and not ignore it, but fail to see it in the depths of our misery.

Ashley ([23:37](#)):

That while we're perhaps surrendering to that pain, and that moment and whatever happened, that it does create this new possibility. That it's anything but a dead end even though it may feel like it in that moment. That we can allow ourselves to be... I think she uses the words, "allow ourselves to be inspired anew" in these moments.



MBS ([24:06](#)):

Ashley, what's the difference in your experience between people who become mired in the failure, for whom it does feel like a dead end, and for people who find the way out of that or the limitless through it?

Ashley ([24:23](#)):

Aw man. That is a million dollar question. I think that there's a lot of different parts of that. There's the part that I've talked to resilience researchers about: What does it actually... and I'm thinking of... to give credit where credit is due, Dr. Monique Crane at Macquarie University in Australia, where you're currently at.

MBS ([24:49](#)):

Hey. Yeah.

Ashley ([24:50](#)):

She looks at organizational resilience and talks about how we need to be... We have the self awareness to know what's going on and be able to look at our emotions and process them. We need to feel resource, to feel like we can change our situation. And we need some distance from that experience of stress. And I think all of that's true. And I've really appreciated her work on the topic. I also think there's more to it though. I had a wonderful handful of conversations with this woman who reached out to me.

Ashley ([25:26](#)):

Now, a lot of people send me their stories of failure, and this wonderful woman, Ossett, did as well. But in her case, her story just had this fierceness and determination to do something about it that I really had to respond. And I ended up on the phone with her, and she said... and it was right at the beginning of COVID... and she said, "I don't see my experience represented anywhere on your website." And she's a woman of color. She was leading a school to create



an educational experience for children from Hispanic and Black backgrounds, I believe. And it had all fallen apart amid COVID. And I'm ever grateful for her feedback, because it was such an interesting moment where I realized I built that website start to finish. And at that moment, I didn't see my own experience reflected in it.

Ashley ([26:20](#)):

Because here I am on the website talking about, we're going to use our failures and learn and grow... and repair with gold. And when I was in the depth of that experience, that was not what I felt like. It was very hard to eat my own medicine when I was actually in it.

MBS ([26:37](#)):

Right.

Ashley ([26:40](#)):

And what Ossett was really good at pointing out was just how important... over the months that we chatted her situation changed dramatically. She is an incredibly powerful and brilliant woman who found a way forward. And it really show... but our conversations highlighted how important how the rest of the world treats us is. Are we all given the opportunity at a second chance? Are we all... Ossett refers to it as grace. Do we give each other grace when we've fallen down. Can we give each other the kindness we need in those moments, the forgiveness we need in those moments when we're floundering? To give ourselves that, but to also, when we see someone else floundering to recognize that that's what it is and give them the second chance.

Ashley ([27:39](#)):

So what's the difference between those that stay down there and those that rise up? I mean, I think it is, as Dr. Crane assured me, it is theoretically true that



we can all repair with gold. But it is not psychologically true for everyone. That it does take an incredible power and good luck, and people around you to support you certainly.

MBS ([28:09](#)):

If you're around somebody who is in that moment of elusive, but somehow very real failure, where you're like, "Okay. I can't define it. But god, it feels like it's happening right now." What guidance would you give me and people listening around how you help people not get mired in this moment?

Ashley ([28:40](#)):

Our tendency is to blame. Especially if we were harmed by the failure. It's very hard to rise above that instinct. And I see it everywhere. When the failure is our fault, our tendency is to become... we feel so much shame that our tendency is to become defensive around it and find reasons why it wasn't our fault. Why we weren't set up for success. Why something else was out of our control. And certainly those things are probably true. They're also probably true for the other people in our life. So I think that tendency towards blame is probably the instinct that I spend the most time just truly in battle with.

Ashley ([29:39](#)):

And I love... I've started to reference Karl Popper's principle of rationality where he talks about how we simply make... everyone just makes decisions that make the most sense to us in the moment given the circumstances that surround us in our experience. I mean, he says it much more eloquently than that, but it's basically... It means that blame is somewhat absurd. That we're just humans trying our best doing what we think is going to work in the moment and then finding out maybe otherwise. That it doesn't. But that we're all just doing that. There's a shared humanity in that experience. And I think that's where that grace comes from.



MBS ([30:23](#)):

I certainly understand if I'm in that moment, how... It's an instinct. Fight or flight is my guess, which is... Fight is part of it. It's the blame. It's their fault. They did this to me. They're against me. If I'm coming in to try and support somebody who's in that mode, there's part of me that wants to do that as well. I want to blame somebody on their behalf to protect them.

Ashley ([30:48](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

MBS ([30:51](#)):

I also want them to feel okay. I want them to get through this fast, because it's making me slightly awkward that I'm having to sit with them in this failure.

Ashley ([31:00](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

MBS ([31:04](#)):

I am curious to know... If you're sitting with somebody who... as you do all the time because people come to your website and they go, "I see myself or maybe I don't see myself but let me tell you my story of failure." How do you present and what does helpful mean in a situation like that?

Ashley ([31:28](#)):

So in my client work, it's largely organizational work. And I think there's a... I almost want to distinguish between the individual journey and an organizational journey. Because in an organizational context, often what I'm invited to do is help people rise above those instincts to see that we can respond really productively. That we can build these healthy relationships with failure so that we can have these conversations well. And so that we can allow



ourselves to take the risks needed to continue to create and innovate and discover.

Ashley ([32:09](#)):

And there's a... it's what I might call is the possibility in those organizational moments. It's like, we can use these experiences to grow wiser. We can do things better. We can learn things that we never would have learned otherwise. And there's a certain practical do things better coming out of this learning there. I think for individuals involved though, and this is really what it comes down to and why I love Sarah's book... is because it speaks to that individual experience that in moments when we are struggling, it does feel really out of our control. And in those moments I think the learning isn't so much learning to do things differently, but how can we be differently in those moments? How do we as humans grow as humans through our hardest moments? Can we use these hardships to practice grace for others? Can we use these moments... In my journey through the last year, the biggest thing I've been working on is kindness for myself. Just trying not to beat myself up quite so much has been my only personal goal that I've set for myself.

Ashley ([33:38](#)):

Can I use these hard moments to actually grow as a human being? And I think there's not a lot of organizational willingness to go down that road because that looks more like traditional therapy or whatever you want. But I think there's a real potential in these moments to show up for the humans around us and let them feel their pain. I think being transformed by failure requires us to acknowledge and accept that yes this hard, yes this sucks, no there's no way that I wanted this to happen. I have been harmed by this person and I can still be my wisest self in my worst moments. That that is always possible. And I can learn... It reminds me of Viktor Frankl's work actually, where he talks about our response to suffering is one of the venues by which we find meaning.



Ashley ([34:38](#)):

I think that that's really what this nugget is getting at. That we can remind folks that we can respond as our higher selves.

MBS ([34:47](#)):

Ashley, it's been a wonderful conversation. You read beautifully, you're so thoughtful about this stuff, you're... I can see why Sarah Lewis liked coming to talk to you because it feels like you're actually kindred spirits in bringing poetry to this idea of failure. The question I tend to finish these interviews on is this one. What needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between you and me?

Ashley ([35:16](#)):

I love that question. I almost want to bring it full circle to your idea of surrender that we started off talking about. Because I think that's... and actually Sarah Lewis talks about it in her book quite a bit with this amazing story of this arctic explorer who... He's headed for the north pole, but because the north pole is just ice sheets, as he's sleeping these ice sheets are moving. And he'll check his GPS after getting the rest that he needs to continue on the next day and realize that he's actually undone all of the last day's effort and has to still get up and pack up and keep walking.

Ashley ([36:05](#)):

And I think there's a really beautiful takeaway in that. At least for me, as I said, this is the question that will forever be my quest is learning to surrender my sense of control, or that I should have control over my fate. And recognizing that... This arctic explorer's name is Ben Saunders I think, and he talked about how when he'd wake up and he'd be having a bad day, and he'd look at that ice sheet, and it was only maybe 30 feet away. And he'd say, "Okay. I'm going to make it to that little ripple. And if I make it there, that's success. And when I get



there I'll decide what the next milestone is, but that is going to be it." And I think there's a wisdom in that of, I accept that the world is literally taking him backwards and undoing his progress. But he's still just going to set that next milestone and feel progress in that.

Ashley ([37:13](#)):

And I bring that up simply because I'm thinking about where people are at in this moment where we're struggling with a year of pandemic and so many failures that were so far out of our control. Where the world just undid all this hard work for us. And how do we operate in that world? And I think there's some wisdom in accepting that fate and being able to still say, "You know what? I'm going to set my goal and take that step forward." Because I think that's almost the only way we ever move out of these failures, is little by little. And it still feels crappy. And at some point you take enough steps that you look back and you're like, "Wow. That was a crazy time and I think I'm out of it now." But yeah. That [crosstalk 00:38:09] might be what I would end on.

MBS ([38:15](#)):

This was such a delightful conversation. I know Ashley a bit and I really enjoy her company and the way that she thinks. And the two pages she read were so rich. And her work is so important. And honestly, that last story of Ben Saunders trying to make progress against the ice and every night being blown backwards from any gains he might have made during the day, it's like a really cold version of me and my inbox.

MBS ([38:39](#)):

What I'm taking from this call, what I'm holding for myself trying to remember for myself, is softness. Because softness for me is the visceral reminder of two things. First of surrender: realizing we can't control our circumstances but we can control our response to circumstances. But also kindness. That's the second



thing: kindness. Kindness to yourself, so you don't add insult to injury by beating yourself up when you struggle and stumble and fail. And kindness to others because they're doing the best they can most of the time.

MBS ([39:17](#)):

I'm in Australia right now. And so with my nieces and nephews. They're all teenagers, so they're learning to be adults. And as I see them doing their work and tackling life, really showing up and growing up, I keep wishing for them: be kind and be gentle. Be kind and be gentle. Be kind and be gentle. And I wish that for you as well. If you're interested in learning more about Ashley, well I'd just direct you immediately to her website: failforward.org. [Failforward.org](http://failforward.org). And if you're a Brene Brown fan like I am, you can certainly find her reference in some of Brene's books as well.

MBS ([39:59](#)):

And I want to thank you for listening to this podcast. It means a great deal to have regular listeners. And you're one of them. And the way we celebrate, and I guess reward our most loyal listeners is to invite them to become a member of the Duke Humfrey's. It's my cool membership site which is absolutely free. All the benefits of membership, none of the costs. The Duke Humfrey's is a library in Oxford University, where I went for a brief time. It was the cool old library where all the most important books were kept. And at Duke Humfrey's we have videos, we have downloads, we have unreleased episodes. It's a treasure trove for people who are geeking out on this website. So if you're loving this stuff and you want to go further and you want to have more, please join the Duke Humfrey's. You'll find that at MBS.works/podcast.

MBS ([40:48](#)):

And this podcast does grow by your recommendation. Whether that's word of mouth. Whether that's giving it a nice review on whatever podcast app you use.



So please pass the word along. If you know somebody in your life who you think they should know about Ashley's work and about failure and about creativity and about Japanese pottery, well do me a favor. Do them a favor and send them information about this episode so they can get into it as well. And I'll just say as a way of wrapping up you're awesome and you're doing great.