



From Failure to Success

Carlos del Rio, MD
Hubert Professor and Chair
Hubert Department of Global Health
Rollins School of Public Health
Professor of Medicine
Emory University School of Medicine
Co-Director, Emory CFAR

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm” — Winston Churchill

Failure is inevitable in life and will be part of your academic career

- **Denial**

- “It seems to be the hardest thing in the world to admit we’ve made a mistake and try to put it right. It requires you to challenge a status quo of your own making.”

- **Chasing your losses**

- We’re so anxious not to “draw a line under a decision we regret” that we end up causing still more damage while trying to erase it.

- **Hedonic editing**

- We try to convince ourselves that the mistake doesn’t matter, bundling our losses with our gains or finding some way to reinterpret our failures as successes.

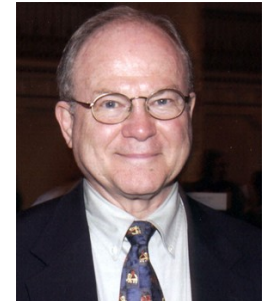
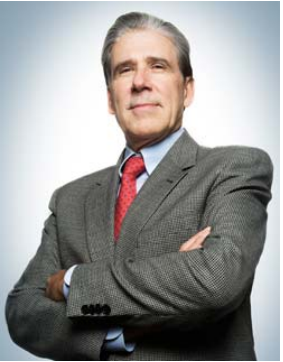
Now, lets get personal, lets talk about some (not all) of my disappointments and failures....

1988 – Accepted into EIS but....

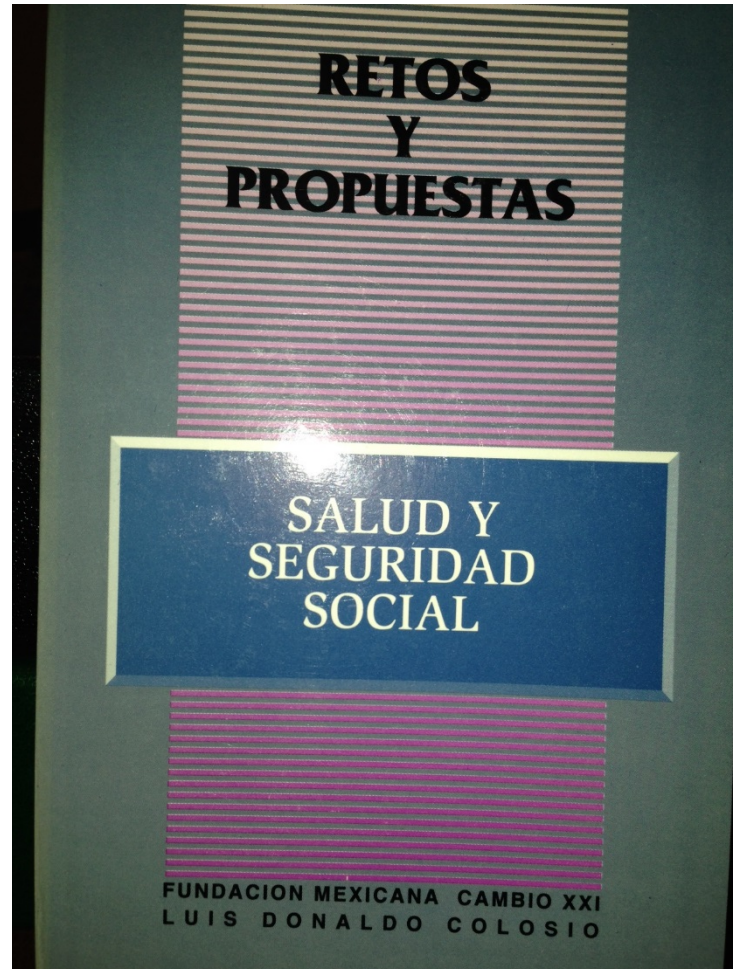
Mexico (1989 – 96)

- Decided to go back to Mexico and work for **Jaime Sepulveda** as Director of the National AIDS Program 1990 – 1996)
- Worked closely with **Julio Frenk** who was Director of the Fundación Mexicana para la Salud
- Asked to develop a research department to inform policy – met **Fernando Zacarias*** (then Director of AIDS Program at PAHO)
- Began to write grants: got my first grant (Rockefeller foundation) – critical advice from **King Holmes**
- Got a USAID grant and began to work with CDC - met **James Curran**
- Got funded by NIH/Fogarty – Met **Ken Bridbord**

*Emory ID fellowship alumni 1975 (together with Sumner Thompson)



In Mexico.....1994



- Asked to work with Dr. Sepulveda to put together the National Plan for the incoming administration on Health and Social Security.
- Thought that we would then be asked by the incoming President (Ernesto Zedillo) to be the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Health
- Cabinet positions went to others
- They still implemented our plan! (Progresa – a conditional cash transfer program to combat extreme poverty)

As a result decided to pursue
other opportunities and returned
to Emory in 1996

Failure is part and parcel of academia

- Two repeat offenders:
 - grants and papers (grant failure hurts more)
- Coping strategies:
 - Mindset: don't take failure as a blow to your self-esteem.
 - Don't think: "stupid reviewers, why don't they understand me"; do think: "how can I write that better so it makes sense to even the most stupid reviewer".
 - There are other opportunities
 - Its not personal: the critique of your work is about your work and not about you.
 - You are not unique.
 - Learn from what goes well.

Grants....well you know how it goes....

Browser window showing the Grants.gov Commons Home Page. The address bar displays: <https://public.era.nih.gov/commons/jsp/status/pi?>

Navigation bar includes: File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, Help. Search bar contains: 2012 ICD-9-CM Codes 001..., Citrix Access Gateway, Google, Microbiology Vignettes - ..., ResearcherID, Rollins School of Public H..., Suggested Sites, vpn.emory, Web Slice Gallery.

Table showing Grant Applications (1-58 of 58):

Application ID	Grants.gov Tracking #	Proposal Title	PD/PI Name	eSubmission Status	Current Application Status	Status Date	Action
5R01DA032098-06 (MPI)		Project RETAIN: Providing Integrated Care for HIV-Infected Crack Cocaine Users	DELRIO, CARLOS		Pending	04/14/2014	RPPR
5UM1AI069418-09 (MPI)		Emory- Duke- Orlando- CDC (EmDOC) Clinical Trials Unit	DELRIO, CARLOS		Pending	12/10/2013	RPPR
5R01DA037768-02 (MPI)		Improving Physician Opioid Prescribing for Chronic Pain in HIV-infected Persons	DELRIO, CARLOS		Pending	09/02/2014	RPPR
5T01GH001185-03		Emory Center for Public Health Training in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies	DELRIO, CARLOS		Pending	08/28/2014	
5H25PS004311-02		THE EMORY ATLANTA GONOCOCCAL ISOLATE SURVEILLANCE PROJECT	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Pending	12/17/2013	
1D43TW009372-01	GRANT11026243	Emory Interdisciplinary Training Program for Global Health Innovation	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Not Discussed	04/02/2012	Transmittal Sheet
1D43TW009770-01	GRANT11458728	Emory-Georgia Fogarty HIV Research Training Program	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Not Discussed	12/12/2013	JIT Transmittal Sheet
1R01AG043846-01 (MPI)	GRANT11007665	Commit to Health: Using Behavioral Economics to Improve HIV Medication Adherence	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Not Discussed	04/12/2012	Transmittal Sheet
1R01DA032514-01A1 (MPI)	GRANT10957340	Lasting Linkages for HIV+ Jail Releases in Greater Atlanta	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Council review completed	02/15/2012	Transmittal Sheet
1R01DA032514-01 (MPI)	GRANT10776590	Forging Lasting Linkages for HIV+ Jail Releases in Greater Atlanta	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Council review completed	05/11/2011	Transmittal Sheet
1R25AI096330-01 (MPI)	GRANT10738779	A National Program to Increase Public Engagement in HIV Biomedical Research	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Council review completed	03/25/2011	Transmittal Sheet
1T01GH001185-01		Emory Center for Public Health Training in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies	DELRIO, CARLOS		Awarded. Non-fellowships only	08/30/2013	
1H25PS004311-01		THE EMORY ATLANTA GONOCOCCAL ISOLATE SURVEILLANCE PROJECT	DELRIO, CARLOS		Awarded. Non-fellowships only	12/17/2013	
2UM1AI069418-08 (MPI)		Emory- Duke- Orlando- CDC (EmDOC) Clinical Trials Unit	DELRIO, CARLOS	Pending Verification	Awarded. Non-fellowships only	12/10/2013	
3R01DA032098-01S1 (MPI)		Project RETAIN: Providing Integrated Care for HIV-Infected Crack Cocaine Users	DELRIO, CARLOS		Awarded. Non-fellowships only	08/31/2011	
5H25PS001412-04		GONOCOCCAL ISOLATE SURVEILLANCE PROJECT (GISP) REGIONAL LABORATORIES	DELRIO, CARLOS		Awarded. Non-fellowships only	12/16/2011	
5D43TW001042-14		Emory AIDS International Training and Research Program	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Awarded. Non-fellowships only	04/10/2012	
5R01DA032098-02 (MPI)		Project RETAIN: Providing Integrated Care for HIV-Infected Crack Cocaine Users	DELRIO, CARLOS	Submission Complete	Awarded. Non-fellowships only	04/02/2012	

Taskbar shows: Windows 7, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Outlook, and system clock: 10:54 PM 9/25/2014.

You are going to get none of the grants you do not apply for....

- Faculty have little experience with professional rejection until they become faculty:
 - Straight As all through school, honors, excellent SAT, GMAT and/or MCAT scores, completed a publishable dissertation.
- Plan in advance
 - Commit the necessary time to your application
 - Seek feedback before your submit
 - Talk to your Program Office
- When you receive the summary statement
 - Find a “safe space” to read about your failures
 - Look over the comments systematically, and list out areas where reviewers found both strengths and weaknesses. If comments are difficult to decipher, a call to a program officer can help

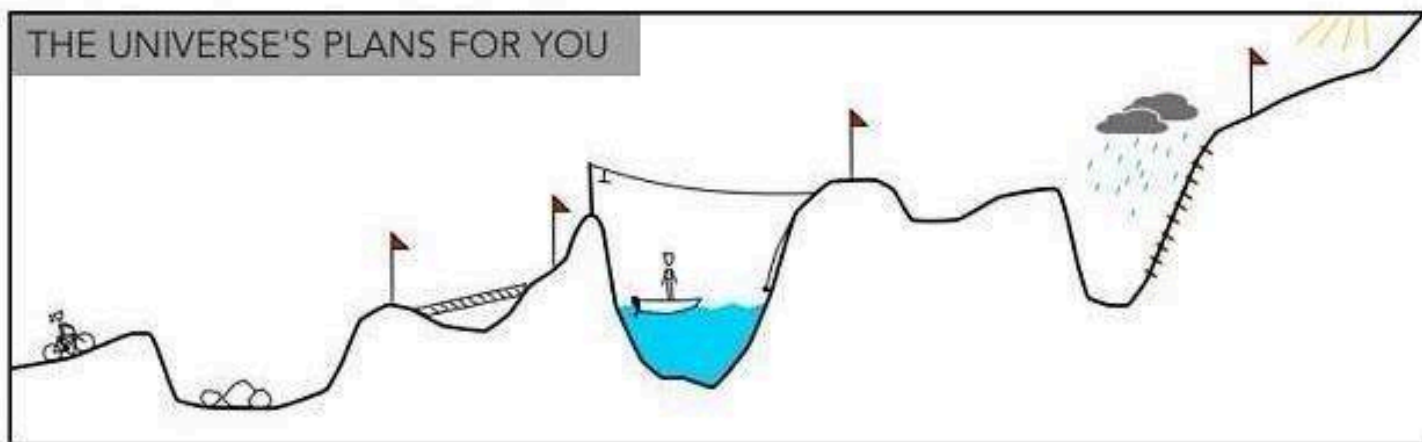
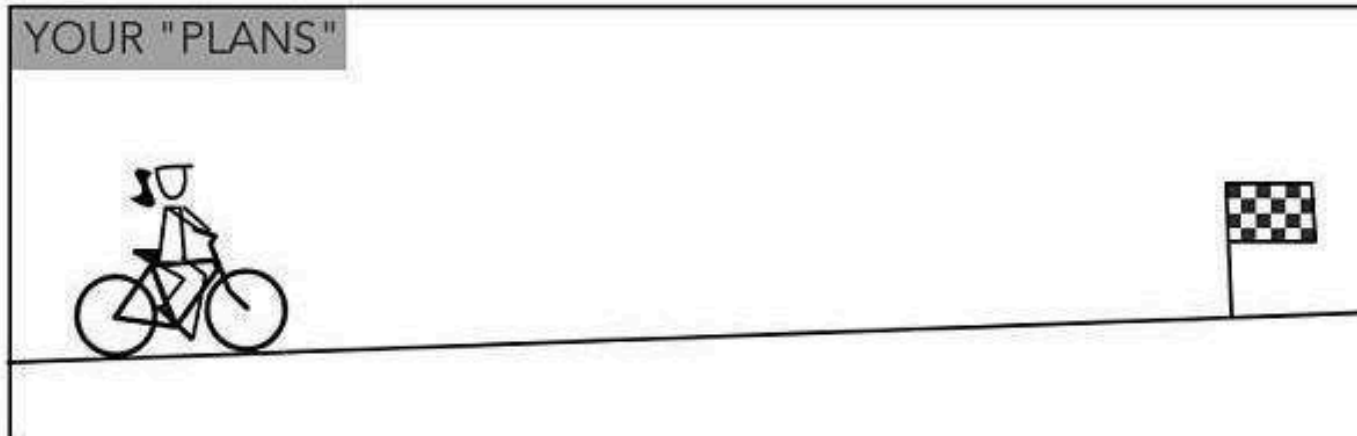
Dealing with failure

- Understandably most people would rather not talk about their failures.
- Failure is a very good learning experience.
- When you make an error, the quicker you acknowledge it, formulate an action plan to deal with it, and have a path for healing or bouncing back, the more credibility, respect and strength you will gain.

“It’s how you deal with failure that determines how you achieve success.”

David Feherty

“One of the biggest secrets to success is operating inside your strength zone but outside of your comfort zone”



DOGHOUSE DIARIES

What do I attribute my success to?

- Trust and support from others – *Excellent Mentors*
 - Find a mentor(s)
- Connectivity – *Networking and collaborations*
 - Find opportunities to work with others who are interesting/fun and complementary
- Like tough challenges and taking risks - *Opportunity and Creativity*
 - Find your passion
- Not afraid of failure – *Persistence*
 - Find why you failed and grow and learn from your mistakes

"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Michael Jordan