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Rejection, Failure, and Mistakes Occur at All Career Stages but Persevere

Lea projects an innate leadership presence, which spans from her student pharmacist years to her service on the ASHP Board of Directors. She is someone who epitomizes success. Yet, Lea opens up about her experiences with rejection, mistakes, and failures. Lea shares personal and practical advice on persevering through tough times and reflects on the people and experiences that continuously shape her determination.

Lea is a Clinical Professor and Associate Department Head of Pharmacy Practice at Auburn University, Harrison School of Pharmacy, and a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics with the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine, Huntsville Regional Medical Campus. She received her PharmD (2001) from The University of Texas at Austin and The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and completed a pediatric specialty residency at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.



Lea's advice is: After a rejection or failure, it is OK to step away from the situation. Reflect, develop a new strategy, and then tackle it with determination. You may want to re-focus your efforts or ask a colleague to assist in order to reach your final goal.

Dear Colleague,

As you progress in your career, you may find yourself thinking that senior practitioners and

leaders know the answers to all questions, can manage all projects, do not make mistakes, and are successful in every endeavor. However, that is not the case. At any stage in your career, you can and likely will experience rejection, failure, and mistakes. I have been a full-time faculty member for more than 15 years, and many people may describe my career as successful. I would agree that I have had successes, but I have also had challenges, failure, and rejections, and I am only mid-way through my career. *How recent you may ask?* Well today, I made a social media slipup, and last week I was notified not to submit a revision of a manuscript unless we (as authors) could satisfy every reviewer comment, which was not going to occur due to a philosophical difference. However, I also had one of the highlights of my career this week with the publication of the *ASHP-Pediatric Pharmacy Advocacy Group (PPAG) Guidelines for Providing Pediatric Pharmacy Services in Hospitals and Health Systems*, which I worked as part of team to develop for years. Despite the challenges, failures, and rejections, I keep going. *Why? Because you just do.* You learn from these situations, become more knowledgeable, stronger, wiser, and better as a pharmacist, teacher, mentor, and sponsor and usually the lesson trickles into your personal life as a wife/husband, daughter/son, granddaughter/grandson and, in general, as a person.

Determination and an optimistic attitude are key factors to accepting and moving on from these challenges, failures, and rejections. If you do not try, you will fail. *Now, how do I feel when these bad situations occur?* I feel like everyone else—mad, upset, embarrassed, frustrated, not valued, not talented enough, _____ (you fill in the blank), etc. *Do women react differently from men?* I think it is individualized. Sometimes you have to step away from the situation before you can analyze it and tackle it again. This break may be minutes, days, weeks, or even months. Once, I waited three months to work on a manuscript again after rejection. It took me that long to get to a positive place and start with a new mindset. I have found that if I tackle the situation immediately, I usually think of a better plan a day or two later. Emotions are not as strong, and I think more broadly about the situation. This is challenging though, as I usually want to solve the problem and move on to the next agenda item of my day. However, through experiences, I am reminded that a quick response is not always best. A male attendee at a conference stated that if he did not read—in the first sentence of an email—that his paper was accepted, he closed the email and would not open it again until Friday. He did not want it to affect his week of work. We all react differently and that is OK.

How do you move on and work through challenges, failures, and rejections? Everyone has their own method for working through situations. I tend to rely on ice cream and Thin Mint cookies! Then, I take time to reflect on the situa-