

In this lesson, you'll learn what to do when one of your systems breaks down so that you can fix it and get back to business as quickly as possible.

To do that, we need to learn the major reasons *why* systems break down in the first place and what to do to get them up and running again when that happens.

Here's what you really need to know, though. When one of your systems breaks down, it's almost always a psychological issue. Sure, what you'll see on the outside is a broken process. But, what's often happening is that something in our head is telling us it's too hard or it doesn't work or we're doing something wrong.

So, when one of your important systems breaks down and you want to fix it, you're usually going to find the solution within yourself. Or, at the very least, you'll see how some procedural changes will help you overcome whatever internal hurdle you're struggling with.

Now, let's look at the symptoms you're likely to see when a system breaks down. You've probably experienced all of them at some point.

You create a system and then never use it. Or you use it, but you don't ever get to the end. Or maybe you get to the end, but you don't get the results you were expecting.

We've gone over all these problems—and the structural changes that can fix them—in our lessons on creation and optimization.

So we'll going to assume that you've addressed those things already, but you're still struggling—most likely with some internal block that's keeping you from executing your system as well as you'd like to.

How do you address a problem like that? It's a lot less concrete.

Even though you might see a lot of different symptoms, I can tell you from personal experience that the primary problem behind all of them is fear. And that fear is usually based on some sort of uncertainty. When you don't know what will happen or you don't trust yourself to perform the way you want to, that uncertainty or lack of confidence is rooted in fear.

You're not terrified of some imminent danger. It's just a low level discomfort. Something that's *just* strong enough to keep you from moving forward, but just weak enough to keep you from really examining why.

Sometimes you'll focus that fear internally by telling yourself that you're too busy or you're not good enough or you just don't have a mind for systems. Other times, you

might focus externally and tell yourself that the system doesn't work or your team is holding you back or there's something else you're not really in control of.

In either case, the result is the same. One or more of your systems are breaking down, you're not getting the results you want, and it's making you frustrated.

When you experience that situation, the best way to get through it is to address it head on. Now, that doesn't mean you have to fix it immediately. That's usually too hard to do when you're fighting your own mind to stay productive.

Instead, you start by giving yourself a little task that's so easy to do, you don't reject it.

What I'll encourage you to do is to keep track of how often you notice there's a problem. You might spend a whole day trying to follow a plan. You try to operate your systems or routines, and it just doesn't happen. Then, you go waste some time doing other things that feel productive to try get your momentum back before making another attempt to follow the plan.

All I'm going to ask you to do in this situation is to keep a record of how many times you attempted to follow your plan, but failed and what you were thinking about when it broke down.

Now, if you can and you're motivated enough, go ahead and try to correct yourself right there in the moment. If you can get yourself back on track without wandering too far off, that's the best possible solution. Even if it feels like you had to drag yourself through the day kicking and screaming, you're going to feel more confident about tomorrow if you can force yourself to get through today.

But, like I said, it's not always possible. In that case, just keep that log of attempts and let that be your win for the day.

And don't be discouraged if that's all you get done sometimes. This is really difficult work. Most people never stop distracting themselves long enough to solve any of their own issues, so the fact that you're even getting started really is a big step.

Now, the next order of business is to put an event on your calendar. You're going to dedicate 15 to 30 minutes to actually analyze this data you're recording.

If you remember from a previous lesson, it's really helpful to set specific time aside to address things that are bothering you. You might even find that just doing that helps you get things back on track.

But, either way, you now have some protected time for problem solving. And here's what I want you to do when that time comes.

First, you need to face the facts—you built a procedure, but it's not working. That's not a judgment. It's just what's happening and being clear about what you're trying to fix will help you stay focused.

Now, look over the log you made. The one you created as you tried to use your system but kept failing?

What were the events that led to the breakdowns? Look for patterns here. Were you distracted? Tired? Hungry? Feeling unconfident?

Sum everything up. What was the primary reason behind all the failed attempts?

Once you've made your judgment there, ask yourself if these are circumstances you can control or not.

If it's something simple like feeling hungry, well, that's easy to fix and completely in your control. If it's something completely out of your control, that's good to know, too. That just means that you need to adjust how your system works to account for those variables.

If that's the case, you can go back to the lesson on finding and fixing failure points.

Sometimes, though, you identify a problem that you *kind* of control, but kind of don't too. For instance, maybe you struggled to stick to your system because you were tired.

Are you in control of being tired? Maybe you are. Maybe you aren't. Maybe you were tired because you stayed up too late the night before. That's an easy one to fix. Or maybe you were tired because your kid was sick and you were up all night taking care of them. Not much you can do about that. It just happens.

The goal here is to trace the problem back to its root, and to do it at a time when you're not in the middle of your struggle so that you can take an objective look at what really happened.

If you try to fix these problems while you're experiencing them, it can be really frustrating because it's difficult to remove yourself from the situation and look at it objectively. That's something you can really only achieve with a little bit of time and space.

When you hold a little time on your calendar to address a breakdown, you make sure that you get the space you need to actually come up with a workable solution, and you're less likely to get frustrated and feel like a failure, which is what happens when you try to fight through it in the moment and lose.

If I could sum up all of this into a few simple points, it would be that the fastest way to recover when you experience a system failure is to follow a three step process. First, try to recover immediately.

But if that doesn't work, just accept it, and keep a few notes about how you're feeling each time you try and fail.

Then, put 10 minutes on your calendar later that day or even that week to look back on the problem more objectively. Just having that time on the calendar helps you move on in the moment because you know you're going to address the problem later.

Then, spend that time tracing the failure to the root of the problem. You might find that you need to adjust your system. Or, you might find that you need to change a routine that's negatively affecting you. You might also find that it was just a one-off problem, and there's really nothing you need to worry about.

And since you now know how to do a quick daily and weekly review, that's a great time to go through this process.

So, if you've been struggling and experiencing some system breakdowns, go ahead and pull out your calendar right now to hold a few minutes to go through this process and see what things you find.

Once you're done with that, I'll see you in the next lesson.