

WHY SOME FAILURES STAY WITH US LONGER THAN SUCCESSES

TEACHER NOTES:

Level: Int+ (B2/C1) | **Time:** 60–75 mins

1. Overview & Objectives

This lesson explains why negative experiences are more memorable than positive ones ("negativity bias") and how to reframe failure. Students will:

1. Define *negativity bias*, *cognitive dissonance*, and *rumination*.
2. Explain evolutionary/cognitive reasons for remembering failure.
3. Differentiate between harmful "rumination" and helpful "reflection."

2. Procedure & Answer Keys

Step 1: Warm-Up (10-15 mins)

- **Activity:** Pair discussion of warm-up questions.
- **Teacher Note:** Poll the class on Question 1. Most will admit mistakes are easier to recall. Use this to introduce "**Negativity Bias**" (we weigh bad news heavier than good).

Step 2: Vocabulary Match (10 mins)

- **Instruction:** Students match terms to definitions.
- **ANSWER KEY:**
 1. **Negativity bias:** Psychological tendency to weigh bad experiences more than good.
 2. **Cognitive dissonance:** Mental discomfort when new info conflicts with beliefs.
 3. **Rumination:** Thinking deeply/repetitively about the past (often negatively).
 4. **Resilience:** Capacity to recover quickly; toughness.
 5. **Double-edged sword:** Something with both positive and negative consequences.

Step 3: Deep Analysis (20-25 mins)

- **Activity:** Silent reading followed by open-ended questions.
- **ANSWER KEY:**
 1. **Evolutionary Reason:** Survival. Forgetting success had no risk, but forgetting a threat (failure) was dangerous, so the brain "imprints" mistakes.
 2. **Expectation & Dissonance:** Failure breaks our expectation that "I am competent." This creates *cognitive dissonance*, forcing us to stop and analyze "What went wrong?"
 3. **Growth Mindset:** The difference is interpretation. *Moving forward* = seeing failure as information. *Staying stuck* = seeing failure as identity.

Step 4: Discussion & Extension (15 mins)

- **Concept Check:** Discuss "*lessons learned the hard way tend to last the longest.*"
- **Writing:** Students write a 100-word reflection on a past failure that taught them a skill.

3. Teaching Tip: Cognitive Dissonance

If students struggle with this concept, define it simply as: "**The stress you feel when reality creates a conflict with what you believe.**"

- **Example:** You believe you are a safe driver -> You hit a parked car -> The confusion/stress is the **dissonance**.