

# Failure- tolerant leaders in academia

Susana Cristobal

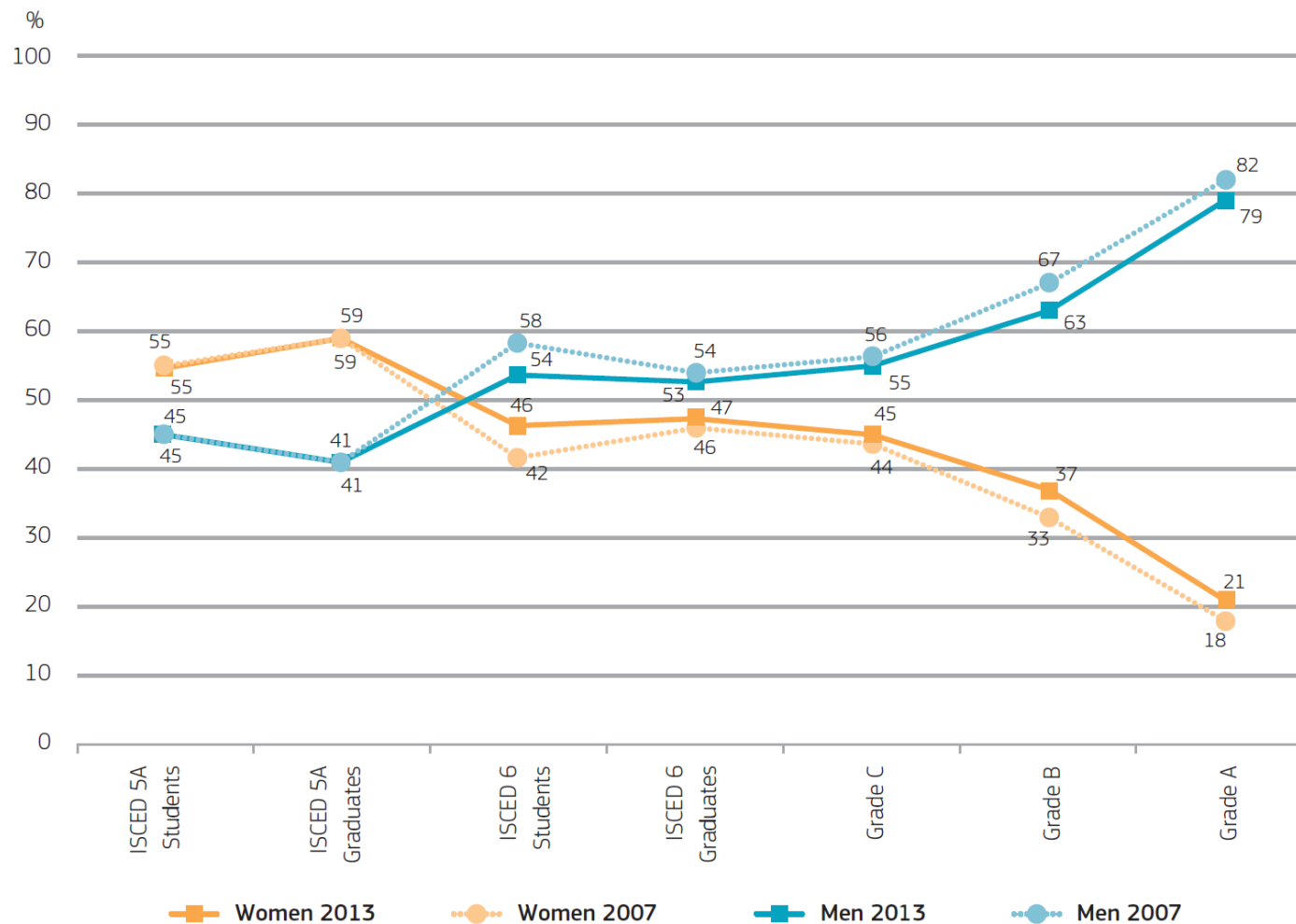
- Professor at Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, Linköping University, Sweden
- IKERBASQUE Guest Professor at Department of Physiology, Basque Country Medical Faculty, Leioa, Spain

Photo: Susana Cristobal

*Susana.Cristobal@liu.se*

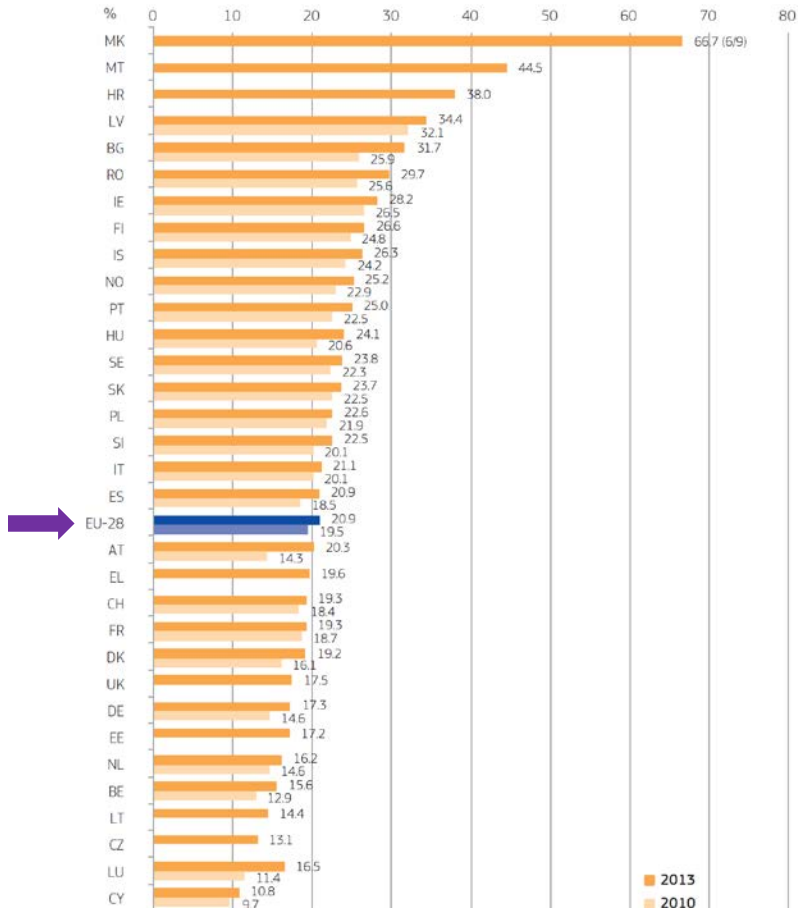
# Proportion of women and men in a typical academic career

## EU-28, 2007–2013



# Glass Ceiling Index, 2010–2013

## Evolution of the proportion of women in grade A positions 2010 and 2013



## Glass Ceiling Index, 2010–2013

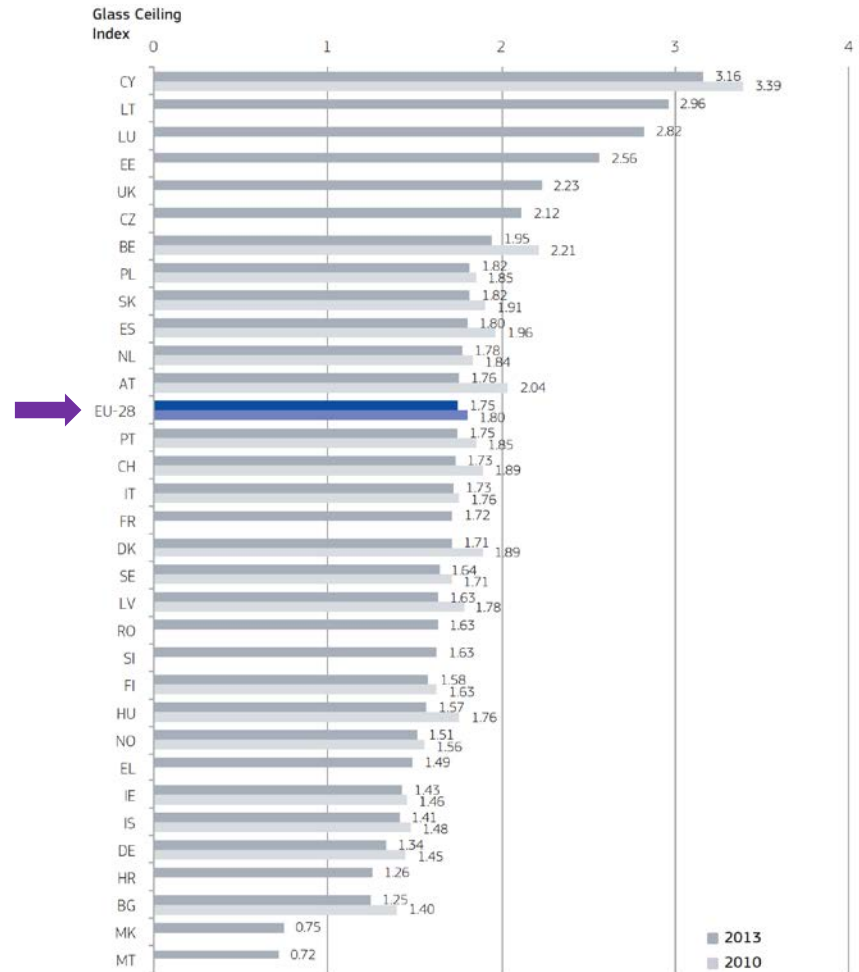




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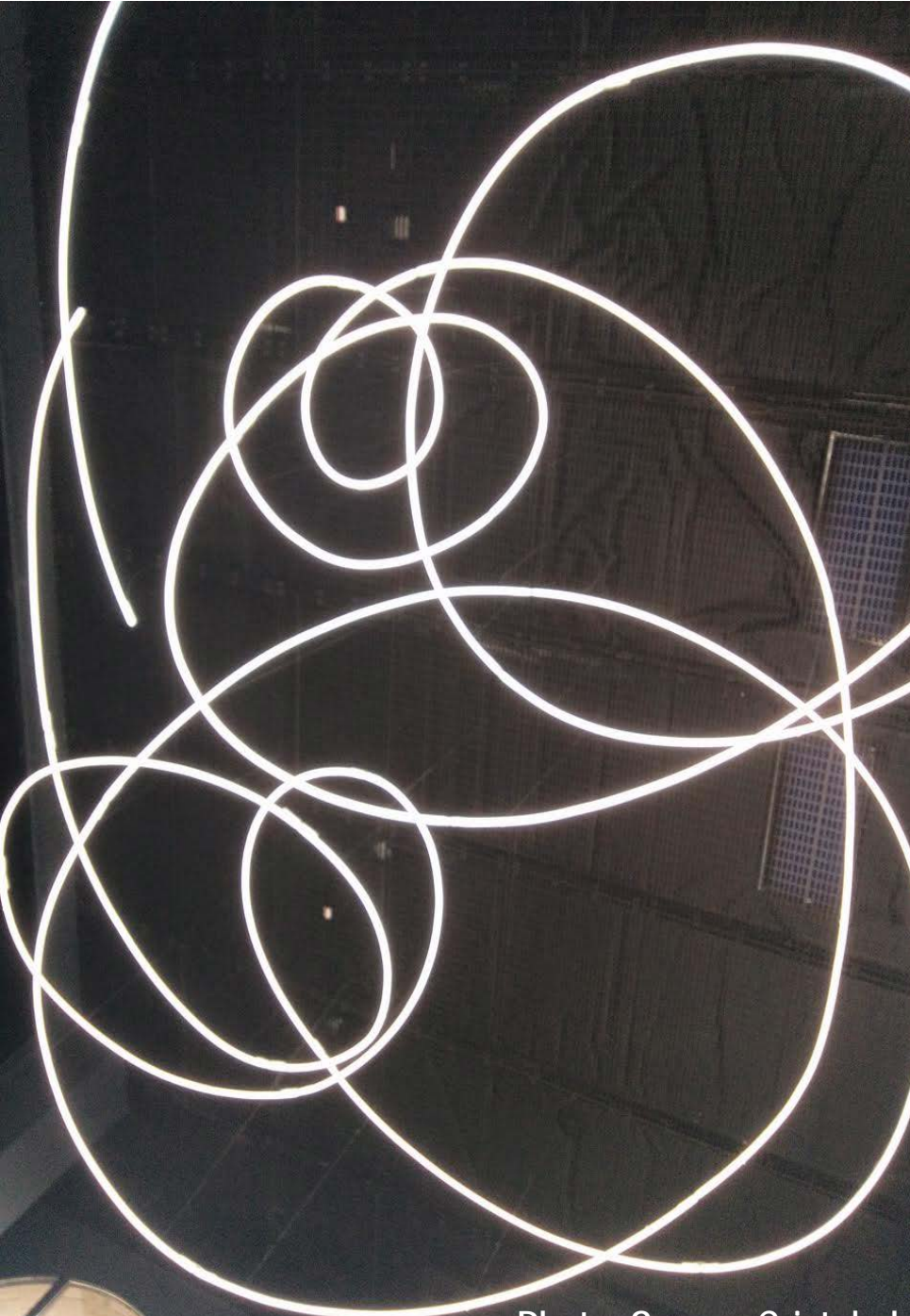


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- **Failure, another step in the career path**
- **Failure analysis**
- **Strategies to overcome failure**
- **How leader reboot after career disasters**



Photo: Susana Cristobal

- **Failure, another step in the career path to excellence**

# Excellent scientist: personal factors

- Inborn talent
- Determination: genuine interest, even passion
- Ability to feel strong curiosity and inspiration
- Ability to experience deep satisfaction in work
- Good education and training (guidance, mentors)
- Good communication / presentation skills
- "Strategic eye" and problem sense
- High criteria (with ability to optimize perfectionism, however)
- Self-discipline (both in work and rest: avoidance of burnout)
- Ability to work hard and to recover
- Persistence (to continue and finish)
- **Frustration tolerance**
- Ability to minimize distraction (good time management)
- Field independence: courage to follow one's own line and intuition
- Self confidence, feeling of worthiness
- **Fear of failure not easily elicited nor does it act as an inhibiting agent**

# Failure-tolerant leaders

- Don't just accept failure; they encourage it.
- Push people to see beyond simplistic, traditional definitions of failure.
- Distinguishing between excusable and inexcusable failure offers two broad benefits
- Creating a culture in which people feel comfortable with failure also requires abandoning traditional ideas about personal competition.
- Encourage collaboration, understanding that it is the real road to innovation.
- Emphasize that a good idea is a good idea, whether it comes from.
- Send clear messages to their organizations that constructive mistakes are not only acceptable but worthwhile.



Photo: Susana Cristobal

(Richard Farson and Ralph Keyes, August 2002 issue of Harvard Business Review)





Photo: Susana Cristobal

- **Analyzing failure... recognizing failure in a safe environment**

# Recognizing failure.. learning from failure



- Failures are **BAD**
- Learning from failure is **OBVIOUS**

**Only.... in a secure environment that accepts failure**

- Failure: bad vs good
  - Based on opportunities to learn, open opportunities that were unaccessible before failure.
- Learning from failure is **NOT OBVIOUS**
  - Context: culture where failure is "guiltiness", ashamed.

# Spectrum of reasons for failure

(List from Amy C. Edmondson, April 2011 issue of Harvard Business Review)

BLAMEWORTHY

## **DEVIANCE**

An individual chooses to violate a prescribed process or practice.

## **INATTENTION**

An individual inadvertently deviates from specifications.

## **LACK OF ABILITY**

An individual doesn't have the skills, conditions, or training to execute a job.

## **PROCESS INADEQUACY**

A competent individual adheres to a prescribed but faulty or incomplete process.

## **TASK CHALLENGE**

An individual faces a task too difficult to be executed reliably every time.

PRAISEWORTHY

## **PROCESS COMPLEXITY**

A process composed of many elements breaks down when it encounters novel interactions.

## **UNCERTAINTY**

A lack of clarity about future events causes people to take seemingly reasonable actions that produce undesired results.

## **HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

An experiment conducted to prove that an idea or a design will succeed fails.

## **EXPLORATORY TESTING**

An experiment conducted to expand knowledge and investigate a possibility leads to an undesired result.

- *Distinguishing between excusable and inexcusable failure offers two broad benefits.*
  - a tool to build a nonpunitive environment for mistake making
  - promote the sort of productive mistake making that is the basis for learning

# Analyzing failure

1. Personal level
2. Cognitive level



Photo: Susana Cristobal



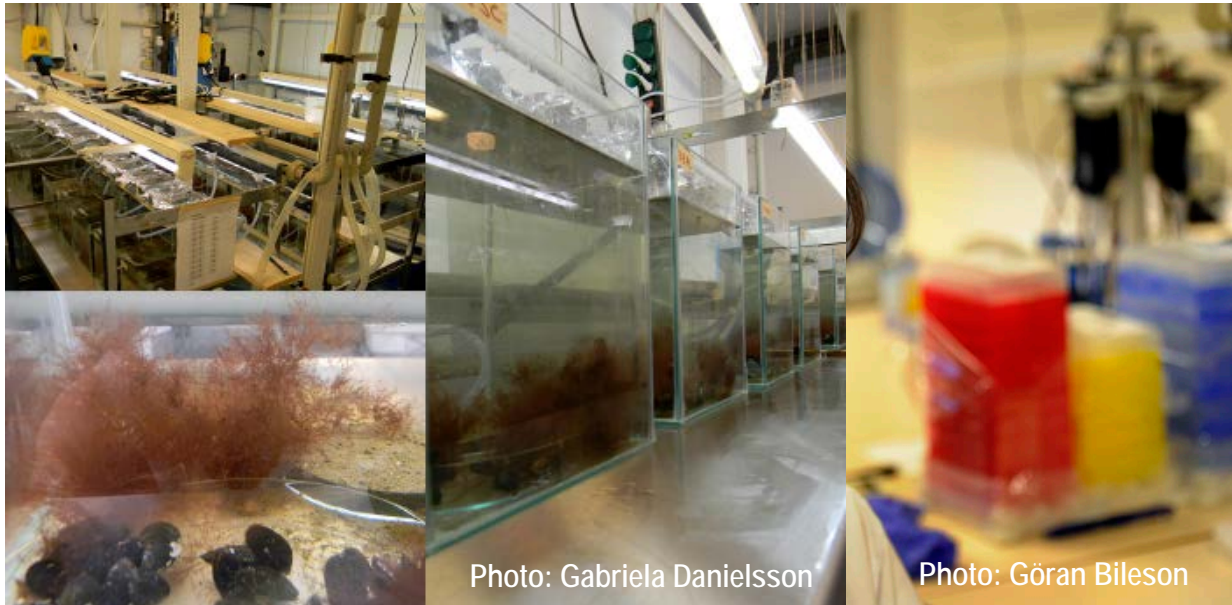
- **Learning from failure...**

Photo: Susana Cristobal

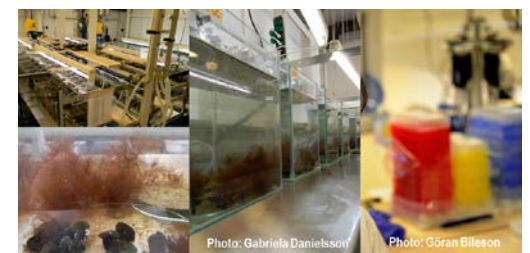
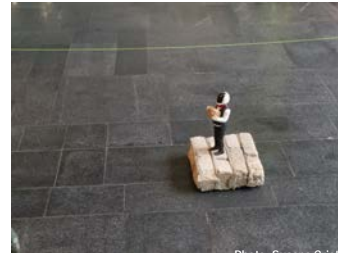
# Effective learning from failure

***“Critical activity for effective learning is strategically producing failures—in the right places, at the right times—through systematic experimentation”***

(Amy C. Edmondson, April 2011 issue of Harvard Business Review)



# Failure, another step in the career path to excellence



- **Strategies to overcome failure**



Photo: Susana Cristobal



# How resilience works



Why do some people suffer real hardships and not falter?

What exactly is that quality of resilience that carries people through life?

Resilience is “innate” but people can learn some strategies from “resilience training”

## **Resilient individuals share three unique traits:**

- a resolute acceptance of reality;
- a sense that life is meaningful;
- an exceptional ability to improvise

# Resilience for a leader

- **Facing down reality**
  - “Do I truly understand-and accept-the reality of my situation?”
  - Facing the truth head on can be a matter of survival.

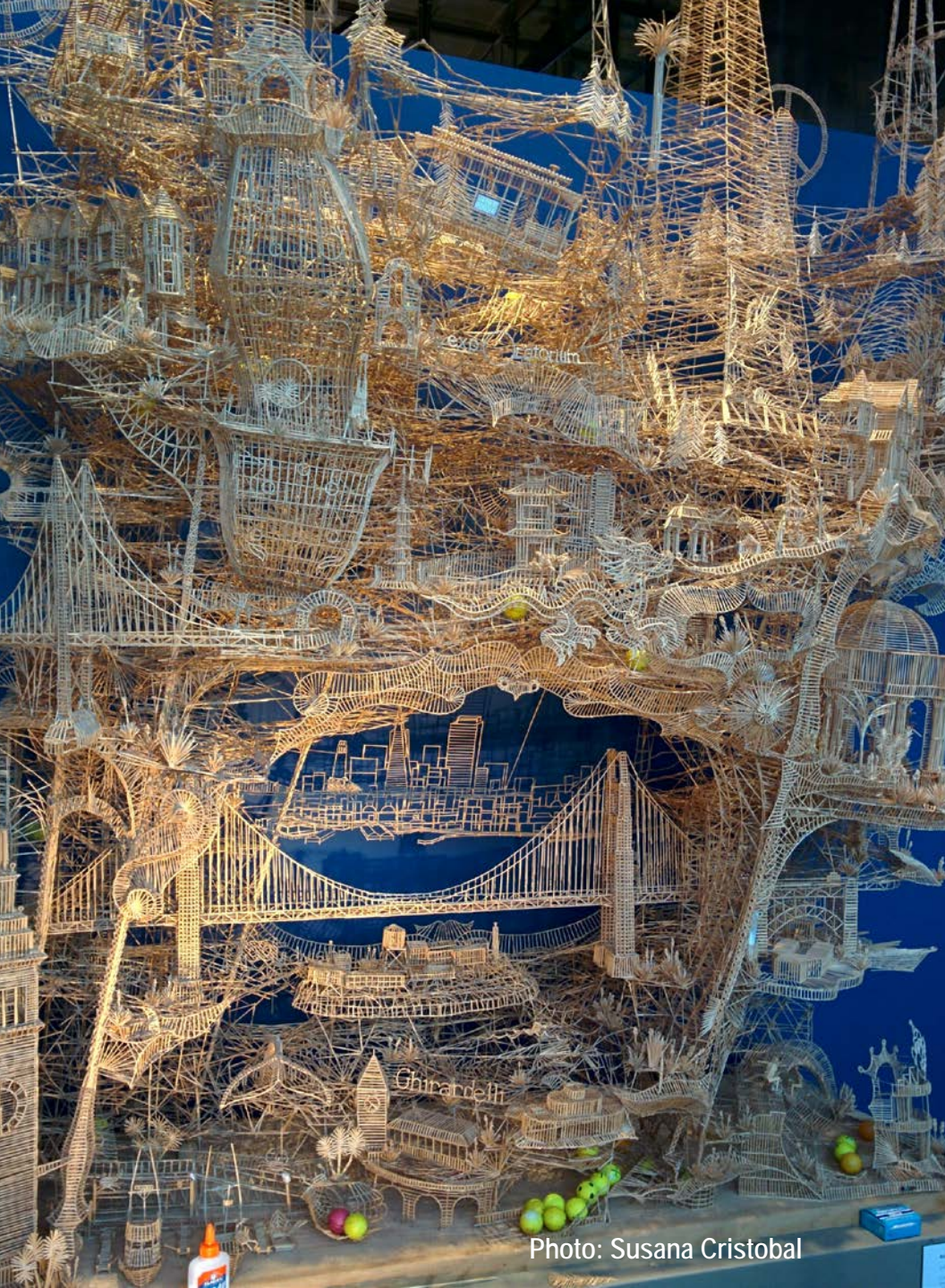


Photo: Susana Cristobal

(Diane L. Coudu. Harvard Business Review, May, 2002)

# Resilience for a leader

- Facing down reality
- **The search for meaning**
  - The second key to making it through difficulty is to find meaning in one's circumstance.




Photo: Susana Cristobal

(Diane L. Coudu. Harvard Business Review, May, 2002)

# Resilience for a leader



Photo: Susana Cristobal

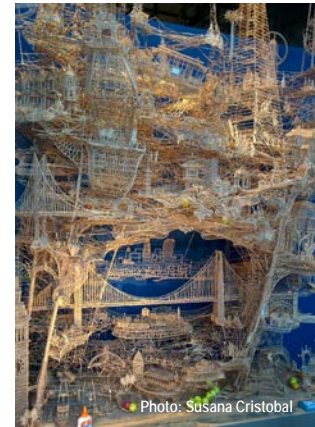
- Facing down reality.
- The search for meaning

- **Ritualized Ingenuity.**

- Third component of resilience is having "the ability to make do...to improvise a solution to a problem without proper or obvious tools or materials."

(Diane L. Coudu. Harvard Business Review, May, 2002)

# Strategies to overcome failure





- Failure, another step in the career path
- Failure analysis
- Strategies to overcome failure
- **How leader reboot after career disasters**



# ***Firing Back***, analyzing how leaders rebound after career disaster

- Test of a leader, challenge to recover from **a career catastrophe**.
- Statistic: 35% of ousted CEOs returned to an active executive role within two years of departure, but 43% effectively ended their careers.



- **Leaders who cannot recover:** they feel responsible for their career setback.
- **Leaders can triumph over tragedy:**
  - They must carefully ***decide how to fight back***.
  - They must ***recruit others into battle***.
  - They must ***then take steps to recover their heroic status, to rediscover their heroic mission***.

# 1. *Decide how to fight back*



(Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld and Andrew J. Ward, January 2007 issue of Harvard Business Review)

- **Responding to a career disaster** is the question of whether:
  - to confront the situation that brought you down—with an exhausting, expensive, and perhaps embarrassing battle—or
  - to try to put it behind you as quickly as possible, in the hope that no one will notice or remember for long.
  - It's not always a good decision to sit on the sidelines and presume that justice will prevail.
- The key determinant in the fight-or-flight question is the damage (or potential damage) incurred to the leader's reputation—the most important resource of all leaders.
- If the allegations are not only sufficient to cause a catastrophic career setback but would also block a career comeback, then leaders need to fight back



## 2. Getting beyond rage and denial



- **The route to recovery is to confront and acknowledge failure.**
- **You set about rebuilding your career, make sure you:**
  - **Remember that failure is a beginning, not an end.**
    - Comeback is always possible.
  - **Help people to deal with your failure**
  - **Look to the future.**
- **Know your narrative.**
  - Reputation building involves telling and retelling your story to get your account of events out there and to explain your downfall. Be consistent.

### 3. Engage others to join you to put your career back on track



Photo: Susana Cristobal

- It is essential to engage others right from the start to join your battle to put your career back on track.
- Acquaintances, advisors are more helpful than close friends in steering you toward opportunities for new positions in other organizations.

(Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld and Andrew J. Ward, January 2007 issue of Harvard Business Review)

## 4. Recover Your Heroic Status

- You must actually *do* things to win back the support of a wider audience.
- You must regain what we call your heroic status.
- After a career disaster, you can rebound only if you are able to rebuild your public reputation with which you were previously perceived.



Photo: Susana Cristobal

- An intrinsic part of recovering this heroic status involves **getting your story out.**
- **To flight against unjust accusation**

(Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld and Andrew J. Ward, January 2007 issue of Harvard Business Review)

# How leader reboot after career disasters

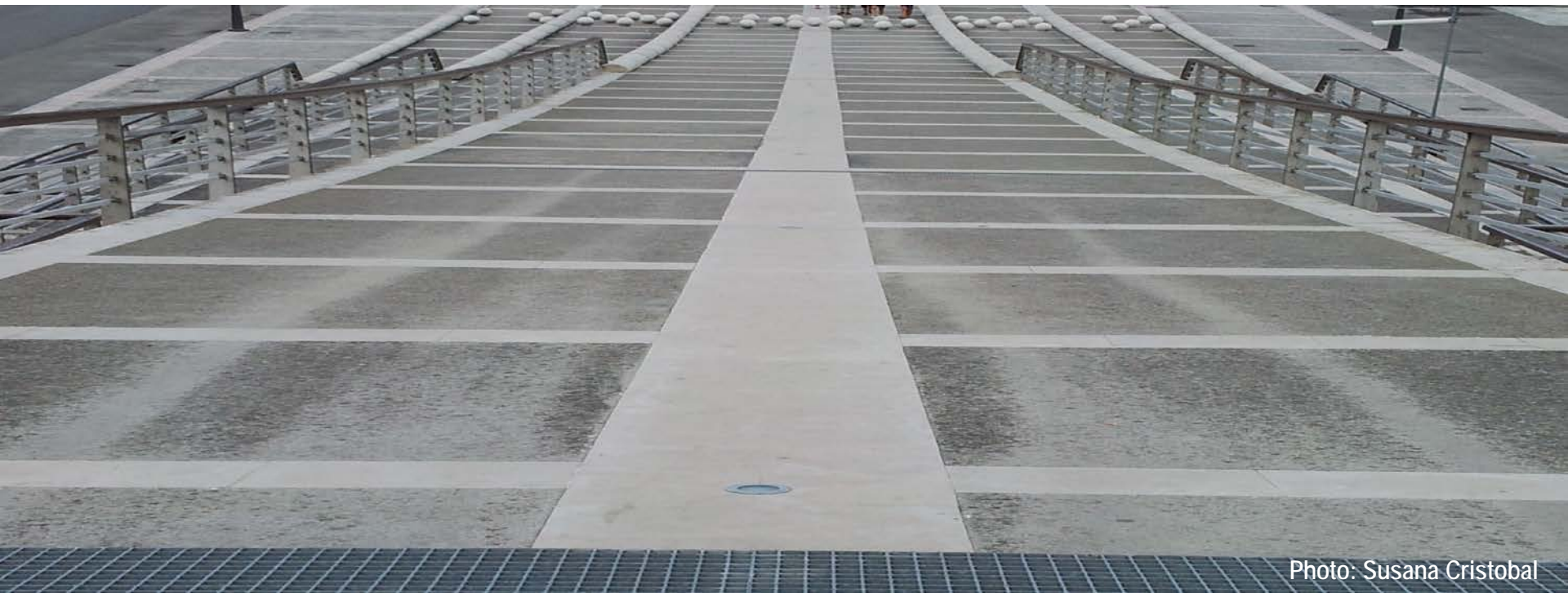


# TOP 10 STEPS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

## 1. Evaluate yourself and past performance:



- What *went well* and why?
- **What did *not* go well and why?**
- What changes need to be made?
- What is my purpose for pursuing academic success?



# Thanks for the attention

Thanks to the ladies from **P2P++** peer-mentoring group for our incredible journey together.

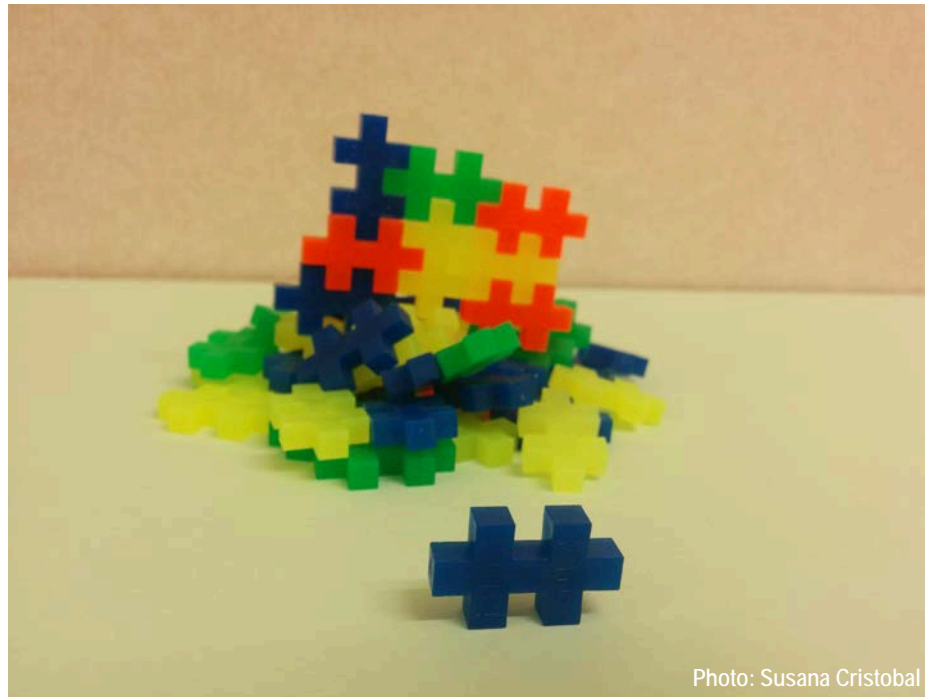


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