

Increase Your Abe-ility

Former President Spent Life Persevering

-- By Mike Kramer, Staff Writer

Abraham Lincoln. The name stirs up images of a nation torn apart and a presidency ended with a single, violent, vicious act. To many, the man also stands for an uncanny ability to overcome setbacks and succeed despite a long history of failure.

You might have heard the stories. Through a history of personal, business and political failures, a stormy marriage, and an unpopular presidency, he persevered. [Click here](#) to see a list of obstacles that perhaps no other president had to face. How could a man who went through all this adversity continue on? How could he consistently bounce back time after time? It would have been easy for Mr. Lincoln to fold up his tent and escape to an unremarkable, practical future.

Lincoln's knack for wresting genius from dispiriting failure is a familiar story to many of us. But what can we learn from how he overcame those obstacles? It was much more than persistence, after all. He possessed other characteristics, used other strategies that carried him through. Whether you have weight loss goals or other goals, you can learn from his approach to life.

Get Comfortable With Failure

A lifelong learner, Lincoln never passed up a chance to learn and grow. With just one year of formal education, he threw himself into reading and studying grammar, becoming an avid self-taught student. When he lost elections or businesses failed, he corrected what he could, learned how to do it better next time, and moved on. Do you view setbacks as learning opportunities or as the end of the road?

Know What You Know

From the time he was a kid, Lincoln knew he wanted to be president, and no stumbling block was going to permanently throw him off course. His simple background and upbringing gave him an unshakable belief in democracy and equality. By being true to who he was and never giving in to self-doubt, he had the chance to achieve great things. Do you have a clear vision for your goals and yourself?

Make the Most of Your Talents

Lincoln found something he was good at and used it for all it was worth to pursue his passion. Debating in his hometown debate club helped him discover a talent for the language that would serve him well his entire life. It was this debating skill that brought him a national reputation as an inspired

leader and carried his name across the country. And it was his mastery of the written and spoken word that produced the most memorable phrases in our history, with meaning and impact that will last for centuries. What are you good at and how can you apply it to your goal?

Stay Connected

Before he reached the age of 30, Lincoln suffered a nervous breakdown. He broke off his engagement to future wife Mary Todd, took to his bed and sank into a deep, debilitating depression. But caring about others is what eventually brought him out. By helping a friend through a similarly tough time of personal issues and marriage doubts, he found the strength to rally. He stayed in the game by shifting his focus from his own troubles to someone else's. This lesson gave him the power to stay true to the bigger cause of saving a country from its darkest moment, even when his personal life was in shambles. Can you help someone else reach his or her goals?

Be Grateful

The country is splitting apart. Death threats are numbering in the dozens. His wife is suffering from mental illness. What does President Lincoln do? He creates Thanksgiving Day. He creates a way for the entire country to give thanks for their good fortune. He knew that despite all that looked bleak, staying focused on positive ideals would be the only way to survive these troubles. He was always thankful for life and its opportunities. When you get discouraged, what should you be focusing on instead?