

Failing with Abandon

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This is a short public service announcement: *you don't have to fail with abandon.*

Say you're playing Civilization, and your target is to get to sleep before midnight, and you check the clock, and it's already 12:15. If that happens, you *don't* have to say "too late now, I already missed my target" and then keep playing until 4 in the morning.

Say you're trying to eat no more than 2000 calories per day, and then you eat 2300 by the end of dinner, you *don't* have to say "well I already missed my target, so I might as well indulge."

If your goal was to watch only one episode of that one TV show, and you've already watched three, you don't *have* to binge-watch the whole thing.

Over and over, I see people set themselves a target, miss it by a little, and then throw all restraint to the wind. "Well," they seem to think, "willpower has failed me; I might as well over-indulge." I call this pattern "failing with abandon."

But you don't have to fail with abandon. When you miss your targets, you're allowed to say "dang!" and then *continue trying to get as close to your target as you can.*

You don't have to say dang, either. You're allowed to over-indulge, if that's what you want to do. But for lots and lots of people, the idea of missing by *as little as possible* never seems to cross their mind. They miss their targets, and then suddenly they treat their targets as if they were external mandates set by some unjust authority; the jump on the opportunity to defy whatever autarch set an impossible target in the first place; and then (having already missed their target) they reliably fail with abandon.

So this is a public service announcement: you don't have to do that. When you miss your target, you can take a moment to remember who put the target there, and you can ask yourself whether you want to get as close to the target as possible. If you decide you only want to miss your target by a little bit, you still can.

You don't have to fail with abandon.