

Early in her career, Miss Stevens lost the Metropolitan Opera "Auditions of the Air." After losing, Miss Stevens was bitter. "I longed to hear," she said, "that my voice was really better than the other girl's, that the verdict was grossly unfair, that I had just lacked the right connections to win."

But Miss Stevens's teacher didn't coddle her. Instead she said to Miss Stevens, "My dear, have the courage to face your faults."

"Much as I wanted to fall back on self-pity," continued Miss Stevens, "they [those words] kept coming back to me. That night they woke me. I couldn't sleep until I faced my shortcomings. Lying there in the dark, I asked myself, 'Why did I fail?' 'How can I win next time?' and I admitted to myself that my voice range was not as good as it had to be, that I had to perfect my languages, that I must learn more roles."

Miss Stevens went on to say how facing her faults not only helped her to succeed on stage but also helped her win more friends and develop a more pleasing personality.

Being self-critical is constructive. It helps you to build the personal strength and efficiency needed for success. Blaming others is destructive. You gain absolutely nothing from "proving" that someone else is wrong.

Be constructively self-critical. Don't run away from inadequacies. Be like the real professionals. They seek out their faults and weaknesses, then correct them. That's what makes them professionals.

Don't, of course, try to find your faults so you can say to yourself, "Here's another reason I'm a loser."

Instead view your mistakes as "Here's another way to make me a bigger winner."