

The Schmooze Stories with a Yiddish Twist

GRADS: PREPARE TO FAIL; SAY IT OUT LOUD

Note: The Yiddish word meaning to fail/to not succeed is “DURKHFALN.”
“Talent” means “talent, and “talantirt” means “talented.”
“Eytse”/“aitzeh” means “advice.”

by
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Syosset, New York

1988: RICHARD BELZER (“How To Be A Stand-Up Comic”) wrote,
“The best advice I can give you is to go on as much as you can,
every night, in any situation where there’s an audience--doing
jokes to a mirror or on a typewriter is NOT a real barometer of how
funny you are as a performer.

One thing to keep in mind always: Failure is inevitable in early
stand-up comedy. No matter how naturally funny you are, if you
don’t have a professional structure to your act and the proper frame
for your material, even the funniest things won’t get laughs. But
remember: Everyone bombs in the beginning....

Prepare to fail. Say it out loud: Prepare to fail--night after night
in some cases and for long periods of time. I’ve seen people who
were real bad for a real long time who persisted and kept going on
and eventually got better. There’s no other way to do it. Fail,
practice, fail. Keep going on--and on.

I like to think that talent DOES win out eventually, but it doesn’t
always happen in storybook fashion or as fast as we would like

it to.”

2015: Actor, Robert De Niro, 71, gave an amazing speech to graduates of the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU. Yes, he did use the “f” word several times. De Niro, quit high school to pursue a career in acting.

He told them, “You made it. And you’re F....before telling them that they will face a ‘lifetime’ of rejection.”

He continued, “You discovered a talent, developed an ambition (“ambitsye”) and recognized your passion. When you feel that you can’t fight it, you just go for it. When it comes to the arts, passion should always trump common sense (“saichel”). You aren’t just following dreams. You’re reaching for your destiny.”

De Niro told the graduates that no young (“yung”) person wants to hear ever--that they’ll face a “lifetime of rejection.”

He continues, “The good news (“gut naves”) is that that’s not a bad (“shlekht”) place to start. Now that you’ve made your choice, or rather succumbed to it, your path is clear (“klor”). It’s not easy. You have to keep working; it’s that simple.”

De Niro went on to say that grads pursuing arts fields are “opening a door to lifetime rejection.” He didn’t sugarcoat anything.

He says that every grad will have a difficult time finding a job. He was confident that people graduating with nursing, dentistry, medicine (“meditsin”) and teaching degrees would likely find a job. But if you’re an artist (“kinstler”), it will be more difficult (“shver”).

And so, grads, let’s look at these success (“hatslokhe”) stories:

- . DAVID SARNOFF, the radio and TV broadcasting pioneer rose from a \$5.50-a-week office boy to chairman of the RCA Corporation and later NBC. (He died in 1971 at the age of 80.)
- . JOHN CHEEVER (1917 - 1982)
Cheever was sometimes called “The Chekhov of the Suburbs.”

IN 1930, at the age of 18, Cheever arrived in NYC determined to be a

writer. He rented a room in an old building at 633 Hudson St. at Jane Street for \$3 a week. When he couldn't afford the rent, he moved out and stayed with friends. According to his daughter, "he bought a bottle of milk and marked it into five portions to make it last."

Source: "The Street Where They Lived" by Stephen W. Plumb

Cheever appeared on the Cover of Time Magazine in 1964. When asked about his working in Hollywood, he replied: "I went to Hollywood to make money. It's very simple. The people are friendly and the food is good, but I've never been happy there, perhaps because I only went there to pick up a check. I do have the deepest respect for a dozen or so directors whose affairs are centered there and who, in spite of the overwhelming problem of financing films, continue to turn out brilliant and original films... I don't like the freeways, for one thing. Also, the pools are too hot...85 degrees, and when I was there, in late January, in the stores, they were selling yarmulkes for dogs--My God!"

B-A-R-K Mitzvah? "Muzzle-Tov!"

Cheever has said that he's had very little drudgery in his life. When he writes a story that he really likes, he says, "It's...why, wonderful!" That is what I can do, and I love it while I'm doing it. I can feel that it's good...

Source: The Paris Review Interview by Annette Grant, 1969, just after his novel, "Bullet Park," was published.

. BARBRA STREISAND

Early in her career, Variety, the showbiz bible, had so badly disparaged her looks, insisting that if she was truly "intent" on being successful, then she should plane down her schnoz. The words "corrective schnoz bob" was fresh in her mind, but she still belted her heart out on song after song, projecting as much confidence as ever. She'd learned how to do that long ago. "In her striving, there was a message, and it said, 'Keep on.' If Garland was the goddess of self-destruction and vulnerability, Streisand was the diva of self-confidence and strength--as well as of a certain kind of magic, one that can elevate the everyday and transform even an ordinary kid into a star."

Source: "Hello Gorgeous - Becoming Barbra Streisand" by William J. Mann

. ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

Huffington, cofounder and editor in chief of the Huffington Post Media Group and one of the world's most influential women, wrote: "We have,

if we're lucky, about thirty thousand days to play the game of life. How we play it will be determined by what we value. Or, as David Foster Wallace put it, 'Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship--be it JC or Allah, be it Yahweh or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles--is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive.'"

Huffington ended her commencement speech at Smith by saying,

"ONWARD, UPWARD, AND INWARD."

BETTY WHITE

Seven-time Emmy winner, Betty White, has had a seven-decade career in Hollywood. When asked what advice she would give young actresses coming into the business, she answered:

- . Treat your profession with respect
- . Come in prepared
- . Walk in to every situation with a positive, open mind. Allow yourself time to experience a situation before forming an opinion.
- . When you're blessed to do the thing you love to do and you're making money at it so you can benefit your passion, that's a pretty great formula. Appreciate it--don't abuse it.

Source: "If You Ask Me (And of Course You Won't)" by Betty White

Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe wishes her granddaughter, Amanda, a "mazel-tov" upon her graduation from Binghamton.

Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and
"Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish
Trivia." To order a copy, go to her
website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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