

If you only have a minute: Rooted and Unwavering is all about connecting deeply with ourselves, others and our service in the world. Life lessons and inspiration can come from unexpected places and teach us perspective, courage and resilience in the face of failure.

"If anyone tells you that failure feels good, I think they're lying to you." – Bernard Slowey

The Space Around Failure

By Esther Groves and Hylke Faber

When was the last time you learned a life lesson from a 5-year-old? Or felt inspiration from a long-deceased relative? Bernard Slowey, Vice President of Digital Customer Success at Salesforce, recognizes the importance of creating space for learning at all levels – about consciously connecting with ourselves and each other to discover new ways of doing things that require a bigger perspective. Here are two role models that have inspired and informed his path as a leader.

Bernard's son, Dylan is a good soccer player as 5-year-olds go. But, in a recent game, he made a bad pass. At Dylan's age, Bernard says, he would have retreated into his shell. But Dylan had a more enlightened approach. Said Dylan: "Oh, yes, Dad, just a mistake, I probably will end up scoring another one for us after half time anyway."

That kind of resilience is what Bernard aspires to emulate as he creates the space for himself and his team to learn from their mistakes rather than be weighed down or defeated by them. To do his part in making that space safe, Bernard stays grounded by practicing really good self-care - spending time with his family, running and meditation – and, not getting lost in the results.

Also, Bernard points out, "...you've got to have space for the moon shots...to create space for the things that maybe don't sound like a great idea...the creativity...the things that are maybe going to bring that metric to the next level in the future."

Another role model in Bernard's life is his grandfather's brother, John Joe Traynor, who died in the 1916 rising battle for his home country of Ireland at the age of 17. Connecting with the bravery of his ancestors helps Bernard put things in perspective and find the strength to bring his best self to the moment. Reflects Bernard, "Yes, life is hard. Sometimes. Yes, my job is stressful sometimes. But I don't have to put my life at risk."

Bernard realizes that challenges in the business world are not life or death – they are just temporary setbacks that will eventually be resolved. So when he encounters failures, even when they seem unsolvable, he holds firm to the notion that none of the pressures in the business world will ever approach the ultimate sacrifice that his ancestor made. "I realize it's just a meeting or a temporary situation," he says, "and I don't let all those other monkeys in my brain run around."

"Failure is so important. When you get past the failure," he says, "look back to see what you learned from version 1, and move on to version 2. You have to let people make mistakes so they can learn and grow from them."