

# The Psychology of Failure

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# Overview

1. Why we fear failure
2. How the brain responds to fear
3. What you can do to minimise the impacts on your own performance

# 1. Why we fear failure....

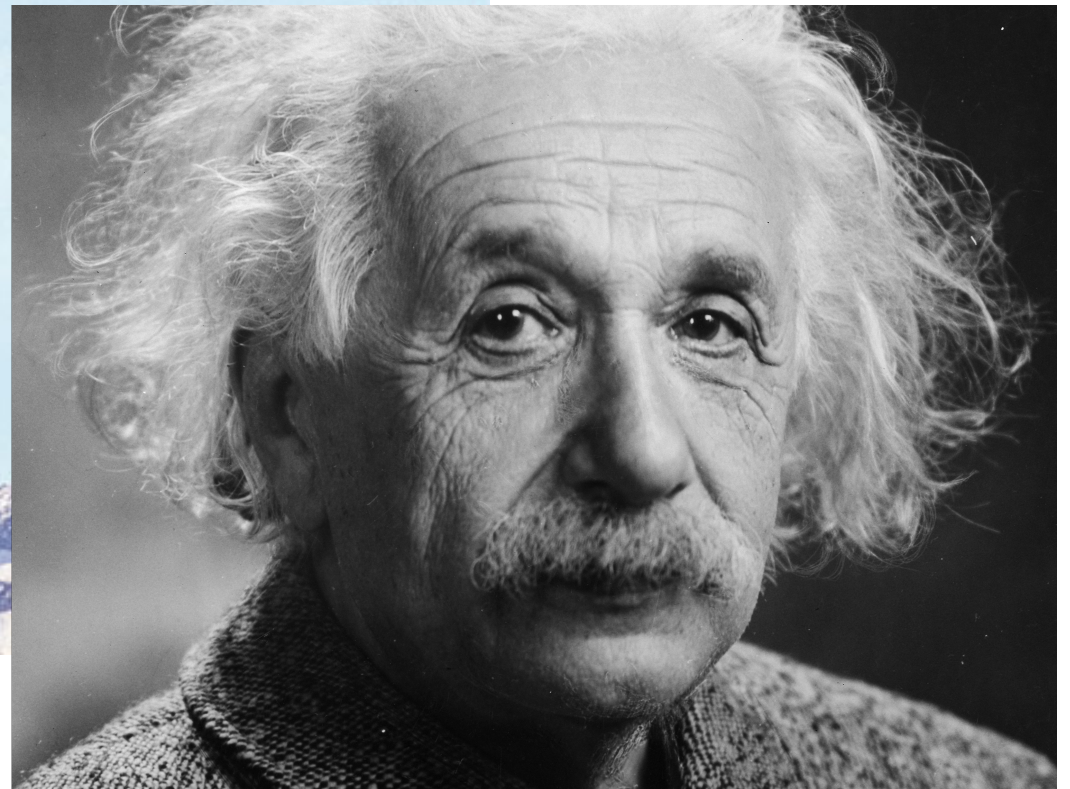
**Failure  $\neq$  Option**

# British Medical Journal Oct 2014

“The medical culture of shame and blame, which can lead practitioners to deny and hide errors...this culture has been a fundamental part of Western medical training for generations. It has also fed the pretension that modern medicine is based on perfected science, which in turn implies that any error, and indeed any adverse outcome, represents unacceptable failure.”

Hoffman, JR Kanzaria, HK





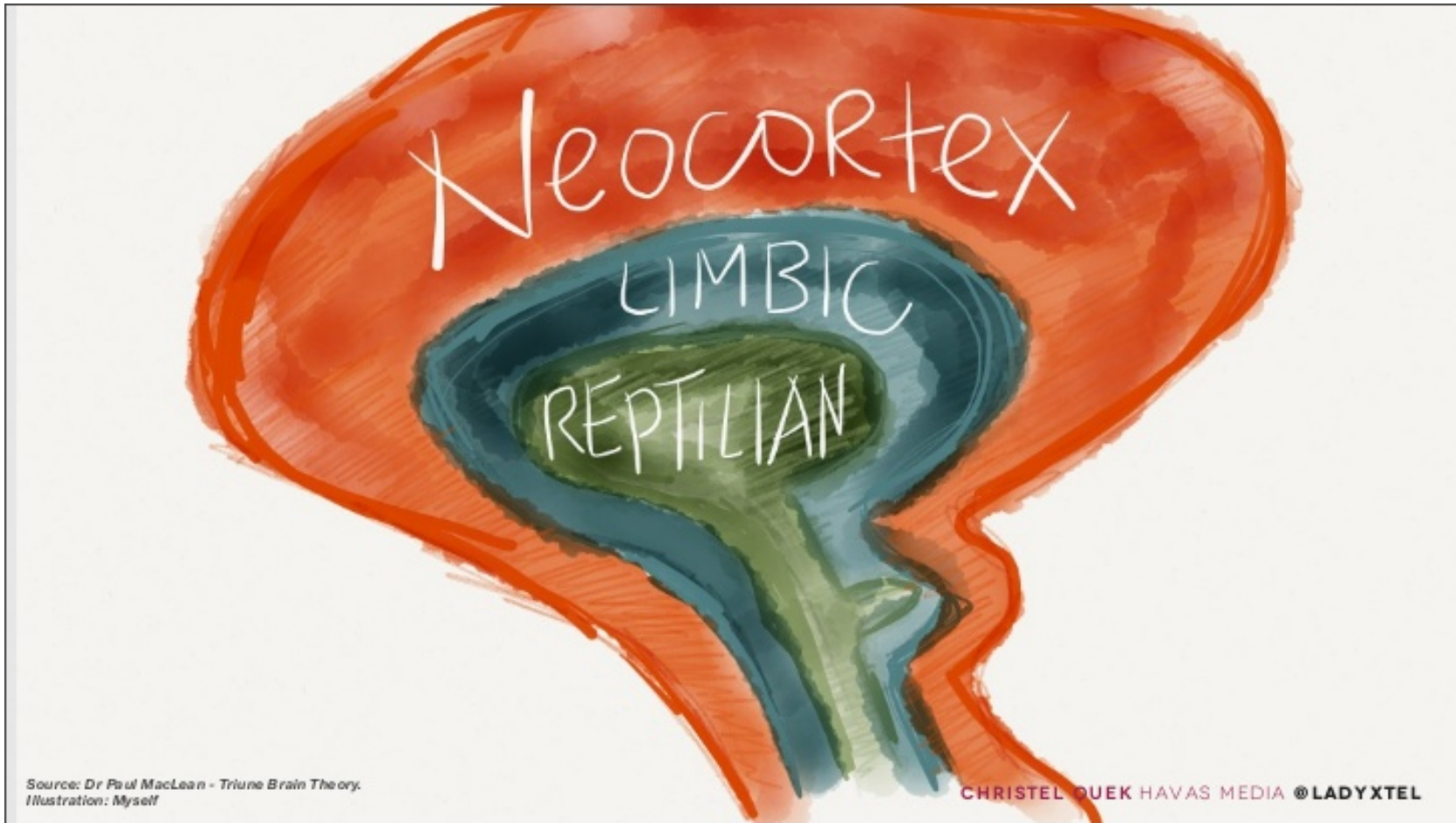
# Additional pressures you face.....

- Potential litigation
- Stalled career progression
- Assessing complex co-morbidity under time constraint
- External bodies – regulation, certification and revalidation
- Reporting mechanisms
- Annual appraisal systems

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## 2. How the brain responds to fear







# Fear of failure and personality



# Fear of failure and leadership



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# Relearn your approach to failure....

Fixed Mindset



Growth Mindset

*"It was not a matter of training myself. It was a matter of training my team."*

*"Once I get the team set up, I never look up. It's they who have to make sure everything is flowing."*

*"The ability of the surgeon to allow himself to become a partner, not a dictator, is critical."*


*"You really do have to change what you're doing based on a suggestion from someone else on the team."*

# Work with your brain.....

1. Free your brain from fear
2. Avoid the trap of narcissism
3. Be a good leader

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An aerial photograph of a sandy beach with waves crashing on the shore. The sand is a warm, golden-brown color, and the water is a mix of blue and white. The waves are breaking in a line across the bottom of the frame. The overall scene is bright and clear.

Failure seldom stops you. What  
stops you is the fear of failure.

Jack Lemmon

“adaptable”

# Further reading

- Shula D & Blanchard K (1995) *Everyone's a Coach*
- Dweck C (2006) *Mindset: The New Psychology for Success*
- Goleman D (2013) *Primal Leadership, Unleashing The Power of Emotional Intelligence*
- Harris R (2008) *The Happiness Trap*
- Kahneman D (2012) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*
- Le Doux JE (1996) *The Emotional Brain*
- Murden F (2018) *Defining You*
- Newman M (2008) *Emotional Capitalists, The New Leaders*
- Peters S (2012) *The Chimp Paradox*
- John C. Maxwell (2000) *Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes Into Stepping Stones for Success*