

In Search of Light

Most people know that Thomas Edison conducted countless experiments with innumerable kinds of materials in search of an effective filament to use in carbon incandescent lamps. As each fiber failed, he would toss it out the window. Ultimately, the pile of failures reached to the second story of his house.

One day in 1879, some 13 months after his first failure, he succeeded in finding a filament that would stand the stress of electric current. Here's how: Edison casually picked up a bit of lampblack, mixed it with tar, rolled it into a thin thread, and thought: "Why not try a carbonized carbon fiber?"

He worked for five hours to make a fiber, but it broke in two before he removed the mold. He used two spools of cotton thread before a perfect strand emerged, only to be ruined when he tried to place it in a glass tube. He continued without sleep for two days and nights before he managed to slip one of the carbonized threads into a vacuum-sealed bulb. Turning on the current, he saw the glow of electric light that we now take for granted.

Edison's experience is instructive for us. A failure doesn't need to mark the end. It can be one step closer to the success you desire.

Just remember: Falling down doesn't make you a failure, but staying down does.

--Beecher Hunter