

My Dear Colleagues etc.

I feel extremely grateful to be able to say few words.

Tonight when we are celebrating our success in gaining the degree of doctor of science in technology, I am going to talk about failure.

Everyone has failed in their lives and will fail many times again. But you know what, I think failure is undervalued happening in our society. People are afraid of failing and some try to avoid it so badly that they start to stress, which makes them small. Just as an example one of my failures during my doctoral studies. I had written my first scientific paper draft and had sent it to one scientific journal. I was really exciting as it was my first paper but at that time I did not know about the publishing procedure. After couple of months sending the paper I received the referees' comments. It was weekend, can't remember was it Saturday or Sunday but anyways, when I red the e-mail from the journal. The other referee was suggesting the paper to be published after corrections. I was really happy about it but when I red what the other referee had written I was devastated. The other referee said that there is no new information on the paper and did not recommend it to be published. After that I lost my belief in being able to finish my doctoral thesis. I had just started the thesis and already it went wrong. The rest of the weekend I was just thinking plan B if I'm not going to finish my thesis. On Monday morning I went to my professor and told him the referees' comments. My professor was just saying that ok now we just have to polish the message and write an answer to the journal. I was surprised, what is this the way it goes? I had thought that this is the end of my doctoral thesis. Everything turned out to be well as the paper was published and even got some good feedback on it later.

A playwright Samuel Beckett has said "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." I think this is a great phrase to remember in life because failures are actually a good thing. They help motivate to do better, to analyse what went wrong and try again. They are for learning, as long as we really learn from them and do not repeat them again and again. Enthusiasm to learn from failures is much better driver in life than fear to fail. What I learned from that publishing incident did not only teach me about failures and how to confront them, but also about patience, which is still not my greatest strength, about the importance of believing in me.

I have to say that failures were the best lessons. At that time I could not confront them with gratitude and it's still hard even though I've tried to teach myself for that. Nowadays I'm more relaxed when I see I've made a mistake because I know that something good will also come out of it. What is perfect anyways? How can I know what is perfect before it happens? I might have some figure in my head what is perfect but it might not be the best possible result.

Being afraid of making mistakes does people to lose their intuition, which is very important in making science or any other field in life. Listening to oneself is so important. Fear causes limits and limits keep people from being creative.

I was afraid of the public defense and saw nightmares of it probably two years before the defense took its place. Luckily one friend of mine who has already defended her thesis said to me "Irina, enjoy the whole day, it's your day". I was like what? Enjoy? How can I enjoy it? It's a public embarrassment. But after giving it a second thought I realized that she has a very good point. For most of us it's once in a lifetime

experience. I followed her advice and the whole day was amazing. I really rocked there and it was one of the best days of my life.

The whole doctoral thesis time is a huge learning process and learning processes are seldom easy. Family's and friends' support is extremely important. So tonight we are also celebrating you our families and friends.

I wish you all enjoyable evening and future without fear of failures or anything else. Be grateful of all the failures and confront them with gratitude. Life is for learning.