

What others are saying about *Falling Isn't Failing*...

"Seeing Rob Roots leave our institution and make a difference in the world makes me proud. Rob has managed to take these life lessons and use them for the greater good."

—Dr. Sylvia Jordan
(Robert's former principal)

"Falling isn't Failing will be an inspiration to those who read it. We are very proud and wish only the best for you."

—Dr. Davenport and Mrs. Davenport
Alpha Omega Middle and High School

"Rob's story and amazing triumph over tragedy has stuck in my head all day- wondering what is coming next for him in life. I know, Greatness!!!"

—Simone Ruiz Narcis, Education Advocate and Parent

"No one is more proud of Rob Roots than I am. I say this not just because I am his father, I say this because I know what he has overcome and the person he has become in the process. Falling isn't Failing is not just another motivational book; it is a tool that can transform lives and prevent other young people from going down the wrong path. As a parent, the greatest gift we can give to our children is wisdom and sometimes the best source of wisdom comes from their own peers."

—Robert Roots - Author, Speaker and Consultant

FALLING ISN'T FAILING

**The Five Keys to Overcoming a Fall and Achieving
Success for Youth and Young Adults**

Rob Roots

Atlanta, Georgia

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*This book is dedicated to my siblings, Janara,
Michael and Darren for inspiring me to take control
of my life and to be all that I can be.*

Preview Copy

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge my mother for her unwavering love,
sacrifice and understanding.

To my father, thank you for being there and for your valuable
mentorship in the publishing of this book.

In addition, thank you to those who helped to
make this book a reality.

Finally, I say thank you to my family, friends and teachers.

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Foreword

“The tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goals to reach.” —Benjamin E. Mays

As a principal and educator, I am committed to the success of all children and believe the message of personal accountability found in *Falling Isn’t Failing* is monumental to achieving that result. The stories in this book relate to the plight of all youth—the desire to be understood while navigating the challenges of growing up. *Falling Isn’t Failing* provides insight into the minds of young people, their struggles, their resiliency, and their ability to overcome adversity when given the proper tools and guidance.

Having personal accountability is not always an innate trait. It comes from parents setting a solid foundation early on and then being there through the good times and the bad. As indicated throughout this book, no matter what Rob Roots’ choices were, he knew his parents would not shield him from his poor choices. It is a hard lesson when we play with fire and get burned, but sometimes it is the pain that brings us back to reality. I can testify that this is not just another well-written book with interesting storylines; it is based on the truth—a truth that many young people face regardless of gender, race, and socioeconomic status. I can make this statement because I have personally known Rob Roots for the past eight years or so when he entered sixth grade at Clements Middle School, where I was the principal.

Struggling with having parents who resided in different parts of the country while developing into adulthood during a critical time of adolescence, Rob Roots, like many of today’s youth, was often times misunderstood. He knew right from wrong and

knew education was important but would occasionally allow his circumstances or his peers to get the best of him. On the days when he knew he would probably make a poor choice, he would ask to complete his assignments outside my office to avoid getting himself in unnecessary trouble. These were the times when I would talk with him and reinforce the importance of making positive choices. Students do not need or deserve high numbers of suspension putting them further behind with their academics. Most times they just need parents and educators who are willing to guide them back in the right direction.

I am extremely proud to have witnessed Rob Roots grow up from the tall, skinny child, the girls loved and the boys felt challenged by, to the successful and thoughtful young man he is today. As educators, we do not get paid the big bonuses of some executives; instead, our reward is the intangible gift of seeing a student like Rob Roots leave our institutions and make a difference in the world. What makes me even more proud is to see him at such a young age have the courage to use his personal story to empower others. He is a young man of character who always held himself accountable, even when it meant facing serious consequences. It saddens me to know and read about how his transition to manhood led him to some of the dark places in life, but in accordance with the person I have always known him to be, Rob has managed to take these life lessons and use them for the greater good.

It has been said that the goal of education is to show people how to think and not what to think. *Falling Isn't Failing* does just that by providing the reader with an uncensored look at the realities of choices and consequences. This is an extremely well thought out book from which youth, educators, and parents can all learn. I believe as you turn the pages in this book, you will also be turning a new page in your life, as you discover some truths and words of wisdom that can only come from being introspective and honest with yourself.

Dr. Sylvia Jordan

Under the Judge's Gavel

“**N**o, your honor, you won't be seeing me here anymore.” When I said it, I believed it. Never in my life did I want to be standing in front of a judge potentially doing time in prison. I once read a quote that says, “Wherever you find yourself, you made an appointment to be there.” Did I want to be there? No, but my past choices could have predicted it. As my father states in his book, *Prepare for the Wolf*, “Our life is the sum total of our choices.” For me, the sum total of my choices meant at the age of fifteen facing up to five years in prison.

Was I afraid? Sure, but more than afraid, I was ashamed of myself. I was ashamed of myself for putting my life on pause while I waited for the judge to

“Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune.”

—William James

I waited for the judge to render his decision and even more ashamed for betraying the trust my parents had in me by getting into this predicament in the first place. Now, with one word from the judge, instead of being expected to follow the rules set forth by my parents and my school's administration, I could be subjected to the rules of a prison guard.

What was only a few minutes, felt more like an hour. Standing there, all kinds of thoughts went through my head. I thought about fights, gangs, and having to share a cell with someone. I also thought about having to save my cornbread from the jaws of another inmate like Eddie Murphy and Martin Lawrence had to do in the movie, *Life*. Getting prepared just in case I had to say it

for real, I rehearsed Eddie Murphy's line from that scene in my mind: "There's gonna be consequences and repercussions!"

Even though that was one of the scariest days in my life, it was not the first time I had stood in front of a judge, and it would not be the last. Keeping it real, just like most youth and young adults, I have a knack for learning things the hard way. When in the middle of a problem, we often say, "If I get out of this, I promise, I'll never do it again!" and as soon as we are out, we forget the promise we made and get back in trouble.

Preview Copy

Why Did I Write This Book?

I did not write this book to tell you not to do the things I have done. That bit of advice did not work for me when my parents, family, teachers, the judge, and even television shows failed to convince me of the value of understanding the relationship between choices and consequences. I wrote this book to help you realize that Falling Isn't Failing; you can pick yourself up and start all over. Why did I choose the word falling? Falling is a result of a misstep, and sometimes we make the wrong choices. This does not excuse you from purposely making bad choices. Be prepared to hold yourself accountable and face the consequences.

Continue to see the possibilities for your life even when you are down because if you see the future in a positive light, then you will be motivated to get up and make things happen. It is easy to fall and lose sight of the fact that in most cases, you can and will recover from the fall. Failure comes the moment you fail to take responsibility for your choices and, ultimately, for your life.

"If you fall down, remember to fall on your back, because if you can look up you can get up." —Les Brown

I've been through situations where I felt like the world was against me and that quitting was the only way out. Problems at school and trouble with the law started at the early age of eleven. It was not that I enjoyed being in trouble; it seemed more like trouble enjoyed me. My parents separated, and my mother moved me and my siblings hundreds of miles away from our father to a different state. I found myself in a new environment, with no friends and no sense of belonging. I

missed my dad and did not like what was happening to our family, so I rebelled. I said and did things that surprised even me. Not only did my parents lose control of me, I lost control of myself. I even asked myself why I was acting this way. Some choices I understood, some I did not.

As we all know, trouble is easy to get into and hard to get out of. The consequences and repercussions of my choices forced me to look at life more seriously. Now, everything I do reflects the outcome of the future I want for myself. But first, I had to discover my priorities and learn to leave the distractions alone. Unfortunately, most people are more dedicated to their distractions than their destiny and end up with a life of mediocrity—or worse.

Going through my experiences showed me how to turn the tables on my problems, and throughout this book, I share these life lessons with you. One thing I've learned is that winners don't just exist. Winners live with a purpose and do specific things to fulfill that purpose. Winners expect to win. With this book, you will understand that the bumps you experience on the road of life are not meant to stop you in your tracks. The bumps are there to slow you down and make you aware of where you are and where you are going.

The Five Keys to Overcoming a Fall

If I wrote about all the trouble I got myself into, I could triple the size of this book. I would be lying if I said the problems did not make my life and the life of my family stressful. Many times I found myself depressed, frustrated, or angry. Lenny Kravitz's song "Fly Away" was my theme song. "I want to get away / I want to get away / I want to fly away." I wanted to get away but could not because, as Teddy Pendergrass sang, "You can't hide from yourself / everywhere you go, there you are." I was the problem because it was my choices that had created most of them.

Quoting Albert Einstein, "Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them." To achieve change requires you to have a higher level of thinking. Hoping for change is not a plan. You have to identify your goals, make plans to achieve them, and then execute your plan. Simply put, "If you fail to plan, plan to fail."

One of the reasons we tend to learn things the hard way is because we think we know it all. We think we can get over and outsmart the system. If we did know it all, then we would not find ourselves in so many unnecessary and predictable situations. Instead of spending time trying to get out of problems, we could be enjoying better life experiences and creating more opportunities for ourselves. I was tired of leaving one problem only to head to the next one. Wanting

"Give yourself an even greater challenge than the one you are trying to master and you will develop the powers necessary to overcome the original difficulty." —William Bennett

to make a difference and pursue my desire to become a successful entrepreneur and entertainer, I decided to use my time to read dozens of books about business, publishing, marketing, the music industry, and goal setting.

While studying, I came across a quote that states, “When life hands you lemons, make lemonade.” This book is an example of me turning my lemons (my challenges) into lemonade (this book as well as my related businesses). If I just hoped to have this book written, published, and in your hands, this book would not be in existence. What made this book a reality was doing what was necessary and staying committed to the process. Was the process of writing this book and admitting the truth about my choices hard for me? Of course! But in order to make lemonade, you have to be willing to squeeze the lemons to get to the juice.

In this section of *Falling Isn't Failing*, I reveal my copyrighted success system: ***The Five Keys to Overcoming a Fall***. As additional motivation, when you feel down, read ***Fall Breaking Quotes***. When you need encouragement to pursue your goals even when the odds appear against you, check out ***The Flip Side***. I also provide you with my customized ***Goal Achievement System (G.A.S.)*** to help you achieve your goals. Make sure you read ***When***, when you feel like giving up or when you are impatient about your success. So let's begin with **Key #1** in ***The Five Keys to Overcoming a Fall...***

Key #1 **Be Relentless**

One of the keys to overcoming a fall is to be relentless. To be relentless means to be determined and unstoppable. Being relentless means you refuse to lose, never giving up. Do not let your circumstances stop you. You have to believe it is possible and work towards the possibility. This does not mean you will not want to give up. You will, but don't. This does not mean you won't be afraid, angry, embarrassed, or frustrated. You may, but still don't give in. Hold on, cry if you have to, then wipe the tears from your eyes and be relentless.

Throughout my numerous challenges, I was always told to believe that somehow, some way, all would be better. When I was left back, it was embarrassing. Seeing my friends promoted while I was retained made me feel like a failure. I did not want to do my assignments. Emotionally I felt devastated. My parents kept telling me that things were going to change, just do my work and keep out of trouble. They had no idea how hard it was for me. Some of my teachers thought I was dumb because I had been left back. I even got into confrontations with students who talked about me. The challenges were not limited to school. I even heard negativity from some of my relatives, who said I was going to end up in jail. This came from the very people from whom I wanted support. Maybe they thought this was showing "tough love," but all it did was make me dislike them.

Eventually, I allowed the negativity to set in. For a while, I gave up without realizing I was making matters worse. My grades slipped further, and the confrontations in school and with my

relatives multiplied. Tired of the haters, I decided I would prove them wrong. I started to take things more seriously. I focused on my goals and got back to work by finishing my assignments and passing my tests. I had something to prove. Things changed drastically because I did not let myself stay down. I got back up and did what I had to do.

Don't give up on yourself or your dreams. I remember looking in the mirror and no longer liking the person looking back at me.

"When the world says, 'Give up,' Hope whispers, 'Try it one more time.'"
—Unknown

There are many distractions that can hold you back, but you have to be focused and determined to stay on the right path. Refuse to let anything or anyone stop

you. Even if your teachers, relatives, or peers are giving you a hard time, it does not matter. Do what you are required to do. No one can stop you unless you allow them by stopping yourself. You lose when you give up. It does not matter who is not in your corner. When you are relentless, you have fewer regrets in life.

It does not matter what you are faced with. Do the best you can so you can achieve the most out of what you are doing. Don't short change yourself. Make sure you take advantage of everything available. Do not even consider failure. If you are relentless, you will be successful.

Goal Achievement System G.A.S.

When life knocks you down, you have to choose to get back up. Remember, you do not have to become special; you are already special. Embrace the possibilities for your life by being serious enough to develop a plan for your future and then implement it. Believe that what you desire is possible. If other people have done it, so can you. If no one has done it, then be the first to do it. There are no limitations if you do not limit yourself. Of course, you may not make it as a professional athlete if you are not athletic, so you should also be realistic.

I think we all agree with Drake when he sang the words, “I just wanna be successful. Maybe it’s the cars, the clothes, I suppose.” Or maybe it’s because we know that our potential is unlimited, and we want an opportunity to experience the possibilities. This is the reason we set New Year’s resolutions, or have dreams about owning an expensive car, living in a mansion, or becoming a celebrity. Based on my research and personal experience, I discovered that the best approach to accomplishing your dreams is to set short-term and long-term goals, along with specific action steps for completing each of them.

Critical to achieving your goals is to visualize your dreams as if they are already achieved. With visualization, you are programming your mind to believe. The old saying was, “Seeing is believing,” but with visualization, a technique used by the most successful people in the world, “Believing is seeing.” Our mind responds to images. Instead of seeing your future in the negative,

see it as positive and you will be more encouraged to work towards your goals. Many people have called visualization the key to goal achievement. To make visualization more effective, add your emotions to it. Feel it, experience it, and be passionate about it.

Just like a car needs fuel to run, I am providing my Goal Achievement System (G.A.S.) as the fuel to get you on the path to achieving your dreams. Enjoy the process, and do not be concerned about when you will achieve your goals; instead, focus on what you need to do and then do it. Worrying about “when” is not the key to success. The key to success is taking specific action. For additional motivation and guidance, read the chapter titled, “When,” which appears at the end of this chapter.

Be sure to utilize *The Five Keys to Overcoming a Fall* to help you design your personalized Goal Achievement System. Also, for your convenience, use the Notes section at the back of this book to write out your ideas.

It’s time to get started...

When?

(Contributed by my father, author, speaker and business consultant, Robert Roots)

The question that concerns most people who are pursuing a goal is this: When is it going to happen? Asking “when” comes from a desire to know the outcome to achieve a sense of security or so that you may feel motivated by visualizing the fulfillment of your goal. My answer for anyone seeking to make a change, develop a new business or product, or to overcome a great hurdle is that “when” is a natural progression of “what.” What are you doing to affect change? What are the needed pieces of the puzzle, and what are you doing to help bring the puzzle pieces together?

In regards to the other questions—who, where, why, how, and what—the answers are just as simple. You are who. As the title of a Pat Boone song says, “Everything begins and ends with you.” It is you who must take control of the change you seek. Start with you, and the rest will materialize. *Michael Jackson* said it best: “I’m starting with the man in the mirror / I’m asking him to change his ways. No message could have been any clearer / if you wanna make the world a better place / take a look at yourself and make a change.”

Where? You begin where you are, the place where you are uncomfortable or unhappy. You don’t wait for you to be somewhere else. Your inspiration is the fact that you are somewhere you no longer want to be. Identify this place as the place to which you do not want to return. Use your situation as the fuel to get your engine started.

Why? Don't spend too much time thinking about why something occurred; the answer constantly changes as we get more information. Why are you not achieving your goals? There could be a lot of reasons—your health, experience, timing, intellect, race, gender, physical makeup, location, attitude, etc. The interesting thing about why is, we never really know why. “Why” is typically nothing more than a convenient excuse. Sometimes the why is a spiritual intervention and is for your own good. My mother used to tell us, “Yours is not to reason why; yours is just to do or die!”

How? How are you going to do things differently? How are you going to respond? How will you monitor your actions so that you can proceed? The ultimate how—how is this actually going to happen—is not for you to know. How is none of your business. Allow the universe to work in your life, and remember you don't need to know how babies are born with two ears, two eyes, a heart and skin to protect them from infection. The universe will take care of the how.

What? This is the question that leads to the eventuality of when. What action are you taking? What have you learned so that you do not repeat the same mistakes or same choices? What can you do differently to get a different outcome? What makes you worthy of this goal or dream? What must you do to be worthy? Perhaps educate yourself, humble yourself, change your attitude towards others, or change your habits.

I understand the anxiousness and desire to know when. I feel it myself. Focusing on when is a major distraction. It is akin to focusing on the problem and not the solution. The solution is what. Do all you can do and then do some more. It is all up to the universe, and the universe pays in exact measure. As the Bible says, “You reap what you sow.” When is the unknown that must be anchored in two words—Faith and Hope. When you finally arrive to where you want to be, the question of when, will no longer matter to you.

About Rob Roots

“The Choice is Yours!”

Rob Roots is one of the most dynamic speakers, entrepreneurs, and entertainers emerging out of his generation today. After a series of challenging events, he decided to examine his life, his choices, and his purpose. Determined to make a difference in the lives of others, at nineteen years of age, Rob Roots established his own company to create and distribute his message and his music. His first book, *Falling Isn't Failing*, is autobiographically written, detailing the path of his life. His story includes experiencing the divorce of his parents, numerous fights in and outside of school, being left back, getting kicked out of school, and going to jail. Even with all these struggles and more, he still managed to graduate a year early from high school with academic honors and attend college.

Rob Roots believes all people have the power to create their own opportunities and, ultimately, their future. He knows from personal experience that anything is possible for your life when you embrace accountability and hold yourself to a higher standard. His path to this realization is one that has unfortunately led many other youth and young adults to failure, drug and alcohol abuse, prison, depression, violence, murder, and even suicide.

Rob Roots' message is one of hope and faith. He shows youth and young adults the importance of choices and gives them the keys to overcoming a fall and achieving success. He speaks on the topics of Accountability, Entrepreneurism, Leadership

ROB ROOTS

and Education. Rob Roots is available for Keynotes, Seminars, Workshops, Coaching, and Product Endorsements.

An energetic, thought provoking, and entertaining speaker, Rob Roots' motto is, "The Choice is Yours!"

For additional information, to purchase products, or to book Rob Roots, please go to his website, wwwRobRoots.com.

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