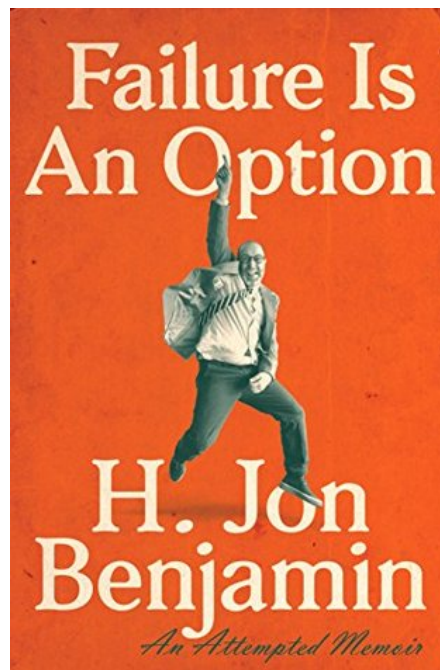




Failure Is an Option: An Attempted Memoir

H. Jon Benjamin

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Failure Is an Option: An Attempted Memoir H. Jon Benjamin

H. Jon Benjamin--the lead voice behind *Archer* and *Bob's Burgers* --helps us all feel a little better about our own failures by sharing his own in a hilarious memoir-ish chronicle of failure.

Most people would consider H. Jon Benjamin a comedy show business success. But he'd like to remind everyone that as great as success can be, failure is also an option. And maybe the best option. In this book, he tells stories from his own life, from his early days ("wherein I'm unable to deliver a sizzling fajita") to his romantic life ("how I failed to quantify a threesome") to family ("wherein a trip to P.F. Chang's fractures a family") to career ("how I failed at launching a kid's show").

As Jon himself says, breaking down one's natural ability to succeed is not an easy task, but also not an insurmountable one. Society as we know it is, sadly, failure averse. But more acceptance of failure, as Jon sees it, will go a long way to making this world a different place . . . a kinder, gentler place, where gardens are overgrown and most people stay home with their pets. A vision of failure, but also a vision of freedom.

With stories, examples of artistic and literary failure, and a powerful can't-do attitude, *Failure Is an Option* is the book the world doesn't need right now but will get regardless.

Failure Is an Option: An Attempted Memoir Details

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From Reader Review Failure Is an Option: An Attempted Memoir for online ebook

Trevor says

So admittedly I only opened this book because Coach McGuirk is my all-time favorite animated TV character & I honestly thought this would be interesting. (Another tale of curiosity killing the cat.) But this was just 200+ pages filled with trite, shallow ramblings, which made it even more frustrating because Benjamin is clearly more intelligent than he lets on.

Highlights include: way too many shit jokes, being dickish to his partner & parents, the time he & David Cross got horrible seats to a Red Sox game, an entire chapter on failed sexual positions (with drawings! ????) & of course, plenty of reasons on why failing can be a good thing.

Unfortunately, this falls in the pile with all the other celeb memoirs whom I feel only wrote something because they were getting too big for their britches & not actually because they had something substantial to offer. Maybe I went into this looking for the wrong thing, but if he actually focused more on what he failed at instead of letting his child eat (human? dog?) poop, it'd be a much better tale. It's possible to get a chuckle at this if you squint really hard & disregard the text.
Next time, please just stick to your day job.

Rachel says

This is my kind of humor.

I just really like being able to laugh at the terrible parts of life and this is an entire collection of everything that went wrong for H. Jon Benjamin. No doubt, he has had a good life - success in the entertainment business, a family, whatnot - but every person has had failure and misfortune and he celebrates his.

At the same time, I read the Last Lecture by Randy Pausch, a man on his deathbed that was using his own tales of success to encourage others to push hard towards their dreams. I'll take H. Jon Benjamin's invitation to fail instead, please.

Adam Sockel says

The memoir from everyone's favorite voice actor who openly talks about how being lazy has prevented him from having even more roles than he does is appropriately hilarious and absurd. Do yourself a favor and listen to the audiobook.

Kevin Farren says

Absolutely lived Failure is an Option. That's not a typo. I'm embarrassing the wonderful lessons within. ...
Ok, that one was a typo. How embracing!

Gina Boyd says

I cackled in public. Jon Benjamin is smart and funny and probably so hard to be friends with. But so smart. And so funny. I'll probably read this again, for the solidarity of people with stomach problems and anxiety, if nothing else.

Harsha Yardi says

Excellent memoir with a completely innovative theme. The voice of the protagonist is so fitting. Very intelligently written. Laugh all the way.

Jill says

I've been a fan of Bob's Burgers and Archer for years, so when I saw that H. Jon Benjamin wrote a memoir, I knew I had to have it. And when I saw that he read it himself, I knew I had to get in on audio.

I was not disappointed.

Failure Is an Option is a phenomenal book to listen to. Benjamin starts from his childhood and goes through his life so far, detailing his failures: how he failed to have a name, how he failed to have a sleepover, how he failed to make a pilot, how he failed at launching a kid's show. He's had a lot of failures. And yet, he's clearly had successes too. He makes the point that while some authors talk about how failures can lead to success, he believes that they're not necessarily correlated. We all fail. We all succeed. But then he goes back to doing one of the things he does best, being funny.

With buckets of honesty and self-awareness, Benjamin shares stories of living in France and studying at university, about trying pot and negotiating with gay escorts (it's not as easy as it sounds, especially when they play Good Gay Escort/Bad Gay Escort). He goes to Canada and baseball games and a Chinese restaurant that his parents "discover." He buys a dirt bike (or two) and offers poor customer service, both in his father's electrical supply store and at a restaurant that serves sizzling hot fajitas. And in with all the stories of his failures are other ideas he's had: failed Presidential pets, failed business ideas, failed pickup lines, and he even includes an excerpt from his fake Holocaust memoir.

His openness is only matched by his ability to take what could be a painful experience and turn it into a laugh-out-loud funny story that makes you like him even more.

Failure Is an Option may be a perfect audiobook. I recommend it strongly (while giggling behind my hand, knowing what you're in for).

Note: this isn't for everyone. There is talk of sex, including threesomes, and drug use. If you know him from Bob's Burgers, you might cringe a little every once in awhile. If you know him from Archer, you won't even bat an eyelash.

Second, far more important note: In this book, Benjamin admits that as a teenager, he liked disco. Not only

that, he had the ability to do the DISCO SPLITS! ON ROLLER SKATES!! How has this not been in an episode of Archer yet??? Someone important: please make this happen, ASAP!

Courtney Hurley says

I got the opportunity earlier this month to attend a “talk” w/ H. Jon Benjamin at Bard College feat. Eugene Mirman, followed by a book signing of this book which was pretty awesome. I cried laughing at many of these stories in here, and that rarely happens for me while reading. So so good. I will also add that anyone going into this book thinking it’s going to be a deep, profound, groundbreaking memoir of his life are clearly not familiar enough with H. Jon Benjamin, and I’ll let you know beforehand that’s not really what he was aiming for. (Keep in mind, this is the guy who recorded his own jazz album without ever having experience playing an instrument... he doesn’t give a shit about writing a “serious” memoir)

Emily says

Welp. H. Jon Benjamin's book was a little bit disappointing. I'd call it mildly amusing at best. There were some funny anecdotes, and he's certainly led an odd life, but it wasn't laugh-out-loud funny. I think my standards for celebrity memoirs are a bit too high after Born a Crime: Stories From a South African Childhood and Yes Please. Nothing else really compares.

HJB's book makes me glad I'm not his partner, given how much of a jackass he is to his longtime girlfriend, Amy. Also, there were a lot of poop jokes. Too many poop jokes.

The whole thing just felt like "oh. huh. I should write a book" with the theme of failure loosely mapped over a memoir. I don't think the book needed to be written. You might get a laugh or two out of it, but it won't be a revelation.

Random says

Chapter 21 - How I Failed My Rental Car
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Lara says

Okay, so yeah, I enjoyed this. Sometimes a lot, sometimes not quite as much, but in either case it was being read to me in H. Jon Benjamin's voice which then infected every single other thing I am reading and now I feel like I will never have a thought in my own voice again and instead all my thoughts will be H. Jon Benjamin's thoughts from now until the end of time. I consider this a hilarious thing.

Anyway, this is really not a typical memoir at all, so if you go into it expecting one, you're likely to be disappointed. It reminds me of this gem by Chris Elliott--The Guy Under the Sheets: The Unauthorized Autobiography--in that it's sort of a comedy spoof of a memoir. Basically, H. Jon Benjamin exposes himself (sometimes literally) through cataloging his many failures in life.

There are a lot of penises mentioned. And sex. And various bodily functions. And inappropriate jokes. Which I was 100% not surprised by. If you're surprised by those things, um...have you never watched anything this man has done? Because, duh.

It's not the most amazing thing I've ever read, and it definitely didn't make me cry laughing or anything, but I did laugh kind of a lot at (/feel completely horrified by) the last diarrhea story, and if the rest of the book may not be particularly memorable in the long run, I feel like *that* will most likely be stuck in my brain forever, and will come back to me every time I'm in an airplane, or renting a car, or valet parking, or watching Archer, or Pasadena is mentioned, or...

Basically what I'm saying is, if you want to have H. Jon Benjamin's voice in your head for the rest of your life talking about diarrhea? This is the book for you!

Amanda Provan says

I absolutely love, love, LOVE, H. John Benjamin. He is the voice of Bob Belcher from my all-time favourite TV show, Bob's Burgers and also the voice of Sterling Archer in the TV show, Archer, which I also love. So when I found out he had written and released a book, I was SO excited! However, I was a little bit disappointed which sucks because I think he's great.

The book was a collection of stories about his failures in life and some of the stories were very funny. Like when he told the story of how he literally had diarrhea all over himself right before meeting the cast of Archer for the first time! However, the overall structure of the book was very 'start and stop'. The chapters didn't really flow very well. The book didn't captivate me. The thing I love most about reading is when you're reading a really good story and you're so captivated that you can't put it down. I didn't get that with this one unfortunately. I would have enjoyed it more if he spoke about Bob's Burgers and Archer more.

I think the overall concept of the book was good.

You can't have success without failure. Don't beat yourself up when you do fail because it usually leads to bigger and better things. That's something I truly believe in.

Liesl says

Pleasantly offbeat. I wish that I had waited to listen to this on audiobook, but I often had Benjamin's voice reading aloud in the back of my mind. For the most part, the bits between the personal experiences of each chapter aren't particularly funny and feel like filler, plus I would have preferred more content devoted to Benjamin's experiences in showbiz. However, I liked getting a glimpse into his childhood and personal life, and admired the overall book's theme that failure is an essential part of any successful life. Benjamin's horrific and incredibly detailed experience with his rental car on the way to Pasadena had me simultaneously cringing in secondhand embarrassment and laughing out loud, and I love his bald acknowledgment that the voices that he does for Bob Belcher and Sterling Archer are exactly the same. Not the best celebrity memoir that I've ever read, yet it has its moments.

Thanks to NetGalley for providing me with a copy of this title.

Offbalance says

I'm genuinely of two minds when it comes to this book. On the one hand? Some of the essays were genuinely funny. The kind of funny where you're cackling loudly in a quiet room (like the one where you're waiting to see if you're called for jury duty or not) and people are staring at you, and possibly moving away from where you are sitting. Some, however, were deeply infuriating. When I was reading about Benjamin's childhood or teen/college years or any time a failure was simply a result of bad luck, Benjamin's writing style and dark humor made for an engaging read.

However.

I am not about to be charmed by essays in which an obviously privileged white man squandered and exploited his privilege and STILL managed to come out successful. There were a collection of essays in here where Benjamin had tons of opportunities performers I know would KILL for (chances to pitch pilots, host shows, perform) but squandered them out of laziness or because he thought that such bratty behavior was "funny" somehow. Those were the moments where I wanted to reach into the book and deliver some deep, hard slaps. Because fuck you, dude. If there was a point to be made that you really should have tried to achieve something instead of fucking around, make it. Don't just sit back and assume you deserved both the chances to squander and the next chance that came! There could have been some more contrition on his part for this behavior, which would have helped to save this, making it a five star rave instead of a three-star meh.

I did appreciate his epilogue in which he encourages others to view failure as an opportunity to try and try again, but the sheer myopia he has that everyone has the same opportunities to try and to fail left a little bit of a sour taste in my mouth.

Jenna Iden says

H. Jon Benjamin has the type of voice (literal and metaphorical) that somehow always makes me giggle. Yet this book was a self-declared mish-mash, and I often found myself losing the thread of the stories. It's a pity since, again, he's so darn funny.

Yes, please narrate more audiobooks. No, maybe don't write another book until you have a thorough plan for one.
