

# I AM STEM

## Roderick Durham

*Roderick Durham is a technical scientist and technical manager for adhesives for [Synthomer](#). Durham describes how hitting “speed bumps” during his career helped him become successful and how change is constant and is for everybody.*

### What do you do in your work?

I have to think outside of the box.

We make glue, basically, that's what I do, I make glue.

Glue can be specific to not just Elmer's and arts and crafts. It can be specific to automotive. It can be specific to house paint. It can be specific to a cell phone and the glue that's on your screen, your screen protectors, or the film that comes on a brand new piece of electronics, an Xbox or a PS5.

### How do you define STEM?

STEM, it encompasses using all of your skill sets that you have learned – to make the world better.

I feel that right now I'm at a position in a place where I can make decisions on products that will get used for the next 100 years. And I want to know how can I improve upon what we've currently learned to use and make it better for the next generation.

I may not be the doctor that develops or a cure for cancer or something like that, but I'm developing a product that the doctor may use in his fight to cure cancer because we're working in close proximity with each other. I'm also developing consumer products that will break down faster so we can eliminate some of the issues we've created over the years.

### What advice would you give your 9 or 10 year-old self?

Keep working hard, keep doing the best you can and giving 110 percent in everything, and anything that you do. It is difficult to not get discouraged because part of research and development is failure.

We gain knowledge from failing. And if you're not used to failing or it's a weird transition for you, you're going to have some type of issue in this type of field.

“IT'S HARD TO SUCCEED WITHOUT FAILING AT LEAST A COUPLE OF TIMES.”



The NeoSTEM Ecosystem is a collaboration of organizations throughout Northeast Ohio who partner to improve STEM educational opportunities for all students. Formed in 2014, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem's goals are to improve meaningful STEM learning opportunities for all students in the Northeast Ohio region. As one of 94 ecosystems operating as a part of the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem holds regular virtual and in-person meetings to learn about what community educational needs are and to develop solutions for those needs. For more information, please contact us at [info@neostem.org](mailto:info@neostem.org).

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