



TEN WAYS TO BE POWER POSITIVE

#8 TURNING MISTAKES INTO LEARNINGS

Just process your mistakes into learnings; it sounds simple and obvious. Why would we NOT want to learn from our mistakes? But as easy as it is to say, resistance can come from some interesting places, and we may not always be aware of it. For example, when feeling ashamed, you could go be convinced that there is something irreparably bad about you and lose your ability to connect with others. When that happens, it makes sense that you might try your best to keep your mistake secret and hidden. When you want very much to be helpful and kind to others, you can make yourself not notice a mistake or a misunderstanding or unintentional harm. When you're not feeling self-confident or empowered, you may react defensively to criticism or challenging feedback. Generally, when people feel like a mistake is a bad reflection on them, they won't admit it.

As an apprentice carpenter, I was afraid of making mistakes. This made me a slow worker. One day, Barney, my boss, said, *"You know, the sign of a good carpenter is not one who never makes mistakes, but one who knows how to fix them."* It took months to learn that lesson.

You may have practiced this lesson in your own life. Maybe in a romantic relationship you have learned that when someone is upset, you ask if what's needed is sympathy or help with a solution. Maybe you have learned that it is better to ask for something to change, instead of talking about what isn't working. Starting with small situations that might have less of a shame reaction, or big impact on your life could help with creating a consistent practice, and even small actions in a relationship can have big results.

Here are several pointers for processing mistakes into learnings.

- Check for shame. Mistakes aren't the result of being irreparably bad, but a mis-chosen action. The mistake is about what you did, not who you are. If you can transform shame into regret and learning, maybe the same mistake won't be made again.

- Engage your curiosity to discourage defensiveness.
- Reframe mistakes as opportunities for learning.
- Take time to self-reflect and self-correct.
- In the end, let it go. Once you have learned and grown from a painful experience, you don't need to carry it around any longer. It's okay to let it go and move on.
- Appreciate the opportunity for learning this mistake has given you.

TRY THIS: POWER POSITIVE ACTIVITY

A. Think back over a mistake you made—either a big one or a little one—that you still feel bad about. Then follow these steps privately.

- Check for shame and move it to regret (move from 'I am' statements to 'I did' statements).
- Notice any defensiveness and be curious about the situation instead.
- Self-reflect and identify what you can learn from this, and do differently next time.
- Let it go.

B. Get together with a friend (who was not involved in the situation) and go through the same process, but this time, talk it through out loud. Practice sharing your vulnerability, and this can help solidify your learnings, as well as create a habit of embracing the learning process. Your friend may also be able to bring up other curiosities or observations that help you move away from shame. We are often better at seeing each others' strengths than our own, and can be kinder to each other than to ourselves.

C. Ask someone with whom you have a lingering regret to meet with you.

- Tell about your regret and concern.
- Describe what you've learned as you have thought it over.
- Ask if you can do a do-over (what you would do if you could do it over again).
- Find out how he or she is responding.
- See if you can agree to let it go.
- Be prepared that they might appreciate the reflection, but not be ready to let things go. This does not mean that your learning is a failure.