



COURAGEOUSLY EMBRACING OUR MISTAKES

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.”

–Brené Brown

OVERVIEW

Staff members think of a mistake they recently made, reflect on what they learned from it, and celebrate their growth.

LEVELS

- Adult

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- During staff meetings to promote courage, vulnerability, and a [growth mindset](#) among educators.
- To promote a positive workplace climate that acknowledges learning from failures.
- At a staff retreat or professional development workshop to encourage openness and trust among colleagues.

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 15 minutes

MATERIALS

- Cardboard or poster board, pins, and a few note cards.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

School staff will:

- Draw on courage to acknowledge and embrace mistakes and failures
- Expand their self-awareness by reflecting on what they have learned about themselves after making a mistake or experiencing a failure
- Develop a growth mindset that encourages learning from mistakes

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Humility
- Courage
- Resilience
- Growth mindset

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-awareness
- Self-management

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Focused attention
- Open awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Take a few moments in a quiet place to think of a mistake you recently made in either a professional or personal context.
- Reflect on the following questions:
 - What did you learn from this mistake?
 - What benefits did you experience after acknowledging your mistake?
 - What did it tell you about who you are?
- (How do you think this reflection might be relevant or helpful to your team or staff?)

INSTRUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

- Consider sharing this practice after the [Vulnerable and Courageous practice](#) to promote staff's engagement and learning from this practice.
- In the beginning of your staff gathering, invite your colleagues to take a few long, deep breaths together to calm and center themselves.

INTRODUCTION

- Begin by sharing a quote on the power of vulnerability by Brené Brown: *"Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change."*
- Encourage an atmosphere of learning by acknowledging our mistakes and failures. This takes courage as discussed in the Vulnerable and Courageous practice.

- Optional: We will celebrate learning from our mistakes by spending 10 minutes at the beginning or end of every staff meeting [over a designated period of time], inviting our colleagues to share what they learned after courageously acknowledging a mistake or failure.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN WHEN EMBRACING A MISTAKE?

- Start by sharing your own reflection on a mistake (see above) and then invite two or three staff members to share a recent mistake (in a professional or personal context).
- Next, ask everyone to take a few moments to identify a recent personal or professional mistake and to reflect on the following questions:
 - What did you learn from this mistake?
 - What benefits did you find by acknowledging your failure?
 - What did it tell you about who you are?
- Now, write brief responses to these questions on a notecard.
- Ask a few volunteers to share their thoughts with the group if they feel comfortable doing so.

CLOSURE: CELEBRATE COURAGEOUSLY EMBRACING YOUR FAILURE!

- Finally, invite participants to pin their reflection notecards to a “celebration board”. (You can use plain cardboard or poster board, prepared ahead of the meeting and placed on the wall beforehand, titled “Celebrating Mistakes and Courageous Learning”).
- Optional extension: Ask everyone to take a few moments to think of ways to acknowledge and celebrate mistakes in their classrooms.
- Thank everyone for their participation and contribution.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What worked well when sharing this practice?
- Were the participants engaged? Which parts of the practice would you keep?
- What did not work well? Were participants uncomfortable with certain parts of the practice? What would you change the next time you share this practice?
- Did you notice any change among staff at school after the practice? If so, what changes did you notice?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND IT

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A [study](#) conducted with a diverse group of 215 women found that acknowledging vulnerability, critical awareness, and empathetic relationships are among the key strategies that can build shame resilience. In other words, acknowledging our vulnerabilities with awareness can help us build resilience to embrace our mistakes without feeling shame, particularly when this is done within an atmosphere of empathy.

This study’s findings point to the importance of building [positive, trusting relationships](#) among staff members, which can be mobilized by an atmosphere centered around [authenticity, humility, and courage](#).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

As teachers develop the capacity to learn from their mistakes and failures, they may be more likely to promote and support their students' learning from failures. Teachers' [willingness](#) to openly invite students to [embrace their mistakes](#) within a positive learning environment may also lead to greater resilience and perseverance in the classroom.

Moreover, a school climate built upon trust and positive relationships can promote teachers' [well-being](#), as well as their [teaching quality](#)—and supporting teachers' personal growth may be just as important as their professional development.

TERMS OF USE

Thank you for downloading this resource! Please feel free to share it with friends, teachers, colleagues, and anyone else who might benefit from it.

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Please email us at ggsceducation@berkeley.edu with any questions about our programs and resources for educators.

With gratitude,
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