

# Making Mistakes: 30 Things You Should Know

Based on the book: Ending The Blame Game by Michael Pearn

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1. We all make mistakes and they are almost always associated with negative emotions.
2. We learn to conceal or ignore our mistakes.
3. Most mistakes, when discovered, are punished (often disproportionately).
4. We learn to avoid making mistakes.
5. If we don't learn from our mistakes there is little point making them.
6. Lessons can be learned from mistakes that are not easily learned any other way.
7. Punishing a mistake does not always mean a lesson has been learned.
8. There are different kinds of mistakes.
9. Process mistakes are often confused with outcome mistakes.
10. Process mistakes are where ignorance, carelessness, or faulty decisions have led to an undesired outcome.
11. Some outcome mistakes are intelligent (the approach or thinking was right but the outcome was disappointing or unacceptable).
12. Many outcome mistakes are stupid and could have been avoided (the approach or thinking was wrong and so the outcome was unacceptable).
13. The fear of making mistakes can be so great that all mistakes are avoided and/or discouraged.
14. Some mistakes are the unavoidable consequences of thinking in a creative way, or of innovating and experimenting where the cost of failing is not critical.
15. The pressure to avoid mistakes can be so great in some organisations (where

blame cultures exist) that challenge, experiment, and innovation are stifled and sometimes actively discouraged.

16. Not making (or facing up to) mistakes could be a sign that an organisation is suffering from the 3 Cs of vulnerability: Conservatism, Complacency, and Conceit.

17. We can learn to identify the contexts in which we are most prone to making mistakes.

18. We can learn to identify the types of mistakes we are most likely to make.

19. A neutral language for talking about and classifying our mistakes can help to moderate the negative emotions that can threaten our self-esteem.

20. Many mistakes that are blamed on individuals are often the result of weaknesses in systems or processes.

21. As individuals there are things we can learn to do for ourselves that will help us harness the positive, as opposed to the destructive, power of mistakes.

22. Managers need to provide a supportive environment (including the freedom to make mistakes) where people are challenged and motivated, and mistakes are harnessed for their learning potential rather than dealt with destructively.

23. Managers need to learn to overcome their own fears and emotions when facing up to and dealing with mistakes, their own as well as those of others.

24. Managers need to understand the critical role of mistake making in creative learning, innovation and change.

25. Managers need to learn coaching, counselling, feedback and dialogue skills in order to harness the positive power of mistake making in others.

26. Organisational leaders need to show, in their words and behaviour, that making intelligent mistakes is necessary to a healthy thriving organisation.

27. Organisational leaders need to transform their organisations from blame cultures to gain cultures.

28. Organisational leaders need to break with convention and provide controlled opportunity to get things wrong as part of a co-creation process.

**Finally**

29. Not making mistakes is bad for you

**And above all**

30. Making mistakes can be good for you!