



CONQUERING THE WORLD WITH MISTAKES

What do Walt Disney, Isaac Newton, and Narendra Modi have in common? They all started out as failures, and then made their way to the top. In the 21st century, there are so many opportunities like this; it has become so much easier to make your big break. Yet, with students plagiarising their assignments from the internet, and determined on getting an A-grade by hook or by crook, does it seem possible?

The Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics surveyed 43,000 high school students in public and private schools, and found that one out of three high school students admitted that they use the Internet to plagiarise their assignments. 59% of the students have admitted to cheating in tests.

The reasons for students not using their own brains for schoolwork are endless. Some may be afraid of being criticised in a harsh classroom environment. Others may have been victims of unimaginably high expectations from parents, teachers, and peers. Yet others are just lazy. Still, the fact remains that students find plagiarism and cheating, a lot easier than making mistakes; learning the hard way. Perhaps, this is why so many people are stuck in dreary offices, with dead-end jobs.

“While we do not want our children to face ongoing failure to attempt to overprotect them and rush in whenever we fear they might fail at a task robs them of the important lesson, namely that mistakes are experiences from which to learn,” write Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein, two prominent child-development experts. “It also communicates another subtle or perhaps not-so-subtle message to a child: ‘We don't think you are strong enough to deal with obstacles and mistakes.’” Students are judged by their peers, parents, and teachers. They're afraid to speak out, to make mistakes. Even the simple act of raising their hand to answer a question in class terrifies them; people's expectations make them doubt themselves to that extent.

Carol Dweck, a professor of Psychology at Stanford University, has done some groundbreaking research on this topic. According to her, people have fixed and growth mindsets. Those with fixed mindsets-- those who believe that people are good at either one thing or another-- feel that mistakes serve no purpose but to highlight failure. Those with growth mindsets, who believe that some people are better or worse in certain areas, but we can all improve and develop our skills and abilities, are much more likely to be able to accept mistakes because they know they're part of learning, and are thus able to hone their skills further than those with fixed mindsets.



A famous example for this is Bill Gates. A university dropout, he could've easily given up, and taken up a job at McDonald's. Instead, he learnt to accept his flaws, and moved on. He concentrated on what he could do, and, driven by his passion for computer programming, Gates built what would become the world's largest software company.

While trying to work upon an idea, making mistake after mistake will finally lead you to a situation where the only possibility remaining is getting everything right. Take Walt Disney, for example. He was fired by a newspaper editor for 'lacking originality' and 'having no good ideas'. He then tried starting small businesses numerous times, all of which ended in failure and bankruptcy. Finally, he developed a recipe for success, and revolutionised the animation industry.

Childhood is the age where you experience new things, where you make mistakes and learn from them. Like countless articles in papers and the internet, one can play the blame game. Or, one can look at potential solutions towards forcing children to be original, and come up with innovative ideas. Things like getting children out of their comfort zone, making them take risks, and applauding them for their hard work, regardless of whether they succeed, or not-- can help.

Teachers should make students understand flexible concepts, and not dole out rigid facts. Flexibility is just as important as learning to accept mistakes, in a classroom. Incorporating skills, like critical thinking and collaboration, into schoolwork, can also help students broaden their minds, and look at things in a different way. All this, while making them less judgemental about others' mistakes: learning to accept their own mistakes, as well as others' mistakes.

Making mistakes mean you're on the right path to excellence. Make all the mistakes you want during your schooling, so, later on, when you look back on your life, you'll know not to make the same mistakes again, and will instead focus on ways to correct those mistakes. After all, mistakes are what make you human, and mistakes will be what made you change the course of humanity.

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