

By Althea R. DeBrule



More often than any of us would care to confess, there are three small words that express the reality of our lives: "I blew it"!

Alexander Pope is credited with penning the famous quotation, "To err is human; to forgive is divine."

Every individual at some point in his or her life has erred or failed—often, and sometimes at the same thing over and over again. Whether our mistakes are caused by good intentions, blind spots or prompted by fear, the end result is ultimately the same—failure!

We all know what it's like to drop the ball—whether at work or home. It's amazing how friends, family, and co-workers seem to disappear when we fail—we feel so alone and can't seem to escape the pain of frustration and regret. Yet, this very pain can bring relief and strengthen us, for our many failures can lead to personal growth and development, if we choose to learn from them.

### The Emotions of Failure

**Fear:** Many leadership mistakes can be attributed to fear—of looking foolish, groundless panic or sudden alarm about the possibility that something awful might just happen, and many other instances of dread or apprehension. Fear robs a person of courage and the power to act effectively. It is often paralyzing, leaving its victim feeling confused and helpless. When we succumb to fear, we create an environment where failure thrives.

**Guilt:** It is good to be aware of having done something wrong or to feel

responsible for some offence, especially in situations that require ethical behavior. In these cases a feeling of guilt tugs at our core values and causes us to act objectively and fairly. But, when we indulge in heavy self-reproach for a supposed shortcoming, inadequacy or occasional poor decision, most likely we are being too hard on ourselves.

**Discouragement:** This emotion is the most insidious of the three for it weakens our confidence, and causes a downward spiral into despondency and depression. Discouragement deters and hinders us from overcoming obstacles, undertaking new initiatives, and making objective and timely decisions.



### Plot a course through the Danger Zones

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "If you prepare yourself... you will be able to grasp opportunity... when it appears". But, if we are paralyzed by fear, guilt, and discouragement, we will never even see the door opening.

Here are a few tips for successfully navigating these danger zones. Use them each time you experience a "failure moment". The more you apply these principles the quicker you will rebound and recover from failure.

#### 1. Confront your fears.

To overcome something you must first engage it head-on. Recognize that what you fear the most rarely comes true.

#### 2. Be kind to yourself.

Realize that you are not perfect and are bound to make mistakes—that's

how you learn. Remember, "*To err is human*"....

### 3. Choose encouragement.

Absolutely *refuse* to be discouraged. Look at your challenges as opportunities. Focus on creative solutions to issues and problems. Sometimes finding out what doesn't work is the key to finding out what does work, so apply the learnings from previous failures to further enhance your successes.

**Failure makes you grow stronger.**

**Take the time to know and understand your danger zones.**

**You'll be glad you did!**

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