

Learning From Your Mistakes by John C. Maxwell

I used to think that as I gained maturity and experience I would make fewer mistakes. I thought, "I'm going to get better at this, because I made a lot of mistakes in the beginning."

I believed that there would come a day when I wouldn't make very many mistakes, because I'd get better. What I learned was that as I gained maturity and experience, I would continue to make mistakes, but I would learn more quickly from them.

What I found out was that I didn't lower my "mistake quota" but I learned better from my mistakes, and it's because of maturity. Maturity helps us learn more quickly from our mistakes and here are the reasons why:

1. *We become more self-confident.*

As we become more self-confident, we're willing to admit things that we would not admit if we had lower self-image.

2. *We realize that mistakes are not usually fatal.*

It was a happy day for me when I realized that when I made a mistake, it was seldom fatal. After you make a mistake and say, "Oh, I lived! I'm okay. I'm going to see another sunrise." Then all of a sudden you say, "They're not as big of a deal as I thought."

3. *We find that we make the same mistakes unless we learn from them.*

Unless I learn from a mistake, I usually keep doing it over and over again. You see, the question is not, How many mistakes have you made? The question is, How many of the same mistakes have you made? If I always do what I've always done, I'll always get what I've always gotten.

4. *We understand that mistakes are unavoidable.*

Look back at your early years. Can you think of the times you tried to avoid mistakes? You know what I'm saying? "Well, I'll just be careful. I won't make any mistakes here." Well, after awhile you just plunge in because you know the mistakes are unavoidable.

5. *We see others make mistakes.*

Wasn't it wonderful when you saw all the people that you admired make mistakes? You thought, "Oh, good night! Look where they are, and they blew it!"

The following illustration says a lot about life and learning from our mistakes. It comes out of a university commencement address many, many years ago by Brian Dyce, who at that time was the CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises. He spoke about the relationship of work to one's other commitments.

"Imagine life is a game in which you are juggling five balls in the air. You can name them—work, family, health, friends and spirit—and you're keeping all of these in the air and you will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it'll bounce back; but the other four balls—family, health, friends and spirit—are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They'll never be the same, and you must understand that and strive for the balance of your life.

"How? Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special. Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you. Don't take for granted the things that are closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life; for without them, life is meaningless. Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live all the days of your life. Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying. Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect—it is this fragile thread that binds us to each other. Don't be afraid to encounter risk—it is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave. Don't shut love out of your life by saying it's impossible to find—the quickest way to receive love is to give, and the fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly, and the best way to keep love is to give it wings. Don't run through life

so fast that you forget not only where you've been but also where you're going. Don't forget that a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated. Don't be afraid to learn—knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily. Don't use time or words carelessly; neither can be retrieved. Life is not a race but a journey to be savored each step of the way. Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift. That's why we call it the present."