



Ray Edwards Show, Episode 358

How To Recover Gracefully From A Big Mistake

Ray Edwards: *Ray Edwards Show, episode 358. How to recover gracefully from a big mistake.*

We all make mistakes. They come in many forms. Some of them are funny, like the furniture store that put a sign there, one that said, "Free one night stand when you purchase a bed." Or how about the church marquee that read, "Don't let worries kill you. Let the church help."

Well, it's easy to make a mistake, it's easy to say the wrong thing or to do the wrong thing. Some mistakes are often more hurtful and more harmful to our relationships than anything else. They're not funny. Maybe you can relate to some of these mistakes. I've made just about all of them. Missing an appointment with a client. It's happened to me. I've written it on the wrong date on my calendar, I've gotten caught up in one meeting and forgotten the next one. It hasn't happened recently, I don't think. I'm sure my team will be quick to point it out to me if I've missed one. It has happened in the past and it's a terrible feeling, isn't it?

How about sending someone the wrong product or the wrong e-mail? I did send somebody the wrong e-mail recently. That was embarrassing. Good thing that long ago I decided not to put anything in e-mail that I wouldn't want published on Facebook. I mostly follow that rule. Showing up late for an important meeting is another mistake. It's pretty common that people make. Calling somebody by the wrong name. Have you ever done that? Have you ever called somebody you know really well by the wrong name?

Sending out an e-mail with typos in it. That's just funny to me because I'm the king of typos. I exist in that realm to aid people who have an obsessive need to point out typos. I want to fulfill that need for you. That's why I do those. Then there's lying about our mistakes. How about the mistake of confidently stating something publicly? Maybe make it a big deal out of how you know this to be true only to find out later that you were wrong. I've never done that. That's never happened to me.

How about drawing a complete blank when you meet somebody who insists they know you? That's happened to me more than I'd like to admit. I like to think that the problem there is I meet thousands of people every year, but it doesn't feel like a really good excuse. How about paying a bill late, not because you didn't have the money, but because you forgot to pay it? How about finding out something that you've said inadvertently offended somebody, really hurt their feelings? That's what a fancy is, it's getting hurt and then being defensive about it. That doesn't feel good. That's not a mistake any of us want to make, to say something that would hurt someone. Not intentionally



I believe about you that you would not want to hurt somebody intentionally by the words you speak. These are all mistakes that we've probably all made, and if you haven't made all these mistakes yet, just give yourself time. How do you recover from these mistakes? It is possible. We'll deal with that, coming up.

Spiritual foundations. I'm going to go to the Bible to see what it says about making mistakes and recovering from them. Especially about learning from mistakes, because I've often said over the years, I think I picked this up from Tony Robbins. It's not a mistake if you learn something from it, it's only a mistake if you fail to learn. That's the only way you can actually fail. Proverbs 24:16 says, "For the righteous falls seven times and rises again. But the wicked stumble in times of calamity." This is very similar to a Chinese proverb that says, "Fall seven times, get up eight." The point is, you just keep getting back up.

Philippians 3:12 says, "Not that I have already obtained all this or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." In this verse, Paul is writing to the church of Philippi, and he's saying, "Look, I haven't hit all my objectives, I haven't hit all my goals yet, but I'm going to keep on going because I took hold of these goals because Jesus took hold of me to achieve these goals. I'm going to do it." Then in Philippians 3:14-16, it says, Paul wrote, "The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus."

All of us who are spiritually mature should think this way. If anyone thinks differently, God will reveal it to him or her. Only let's live in a way that is consistent with whatever level we have reached. Paul is just saying, continue to be the best that is within you. You know you're capable of a certain standard, a certain level of behavior and thinking in approaching life. Live at that level until you reach the next level.

Then there's one of my favorite passages about this subject is in Isaiah 43:18-19, where it says, "Don't remember the prior things. Don't ponder ancient history. Look, I'm doing a new thing. Now it sprouts up. Don't you recognize it? I'm making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness. The beasts of the field, the jackals and the ostriches will honor me because I have put water in the desert and streams in the wilderness to give water to my people, my chosen ones." That's you. Take courage. Take heart. If you've made a mistake, just dust off your britches and get back up.

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We talked about some common mistakes. There are other common mistakes that are much more hurtful and much more damaging. If we think back to the serious blunders that we've known about in recent years, think about the Bill Clinton Monica-Lewinsky scandal in the 90s. President Bill Clinton committed a huge moral mistake,



not really a mistake even, I would put this under the category of sin. I know that's an old fashioned word, but a mistake, I think, implies a certain level of innocence.

Anyway, I'm getting judgmental and I don't mean to do that. Let's just say he committed a big mistake, and it was through sexual encounters with Monica Lewinsky. If those weren't bad enough, what really upset everybody, if you remember this, if you were around at the time, were Clinton's blatant lies and his twisting of the truth under oath and he's playing games with words right down to the point of saying, "Well, it depends on what the meaning of the word is, is." The more he lied, the bigger the scandal became. Consequently, he lost lots of respect, integrity and trust with the American people, and that resulted in his impeachment.

Now, that's an extreme example, and there's probably worse, more contemporary examples we could all think of. There's a lesson here for all of us. Committing a big mistake and responding poorly can make the mistake even worse. That's what we want to avoid. What do we do when we make a big mistake? How do we repair the damage? How do we prevent making the mistake to begin with? Mistakes can occur for a lot of different reasons, but there are some common patterns that lead to our making these big goofs. Things like cutting corners, rushing through work, or the job or through a conversation. Not paying attention to detail, being preoccupied with other things.

I'm amazed at how many times I'm in a meeting with somebody, and they will just break away from the conversation. I'll be talking to them and they'll just grab their phone and start looking at their phone. It's just me and the other person. I'm just shocked every time it happens. I don't know why. Why this surprises me, I don't know. Apparently, I'm a slow learner. This is what people do now. They feel like it's okay to just drop their attention to you and start paying attention to something else. Because it sends the signal to me that, Ray, whatever you're saying does not mean as much to me than whatever this random message that came into my cellphone is. Being preoccupied with other things like your cellphone, your smartphone-- If I call it a cellphone, is that old fashioned? Being preoccupied with your smartphone, is a mistake.

Other things that can cause mistakes are things like-- Let me back up. Being preoccupied with your cellphone or your smartphone is not a mistake, it causes mistakes, like traffic accidents. People who text while driving have been shown to be at least as bad as somebody who's legally drunk. Being preoccupied with that phone can cost you dearly. Other things that can cause you to make mistakes, stress, dishonesty, and this is one that-- None of us would probably volunteer and say, "I'm a liar. I lie all the time. I lie, lie, lie." Dr. House would say, "Everybody lies." At one time or another, he's probably right. But nobody wakes up in the morning thinking, I'm going to tell a bunch of big lies today and I'm super excited about it. What happens is, it begins as a small shading of the truth, and we keep stretching that boundary and then the next thing you know, you're telling lots of lies. That's it.



The old saying is, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive. Because if you lie a lot, you have to remember all the lies you told. It's much easier to tell the truth because you don't remember anything. Not having a moral compass.

Recently I did an episode about having your own code of conduct. That's part of my moral compass. If I didn't have a moral compass, then I wouldn't know when I was transgressing those lines. Even worse is having a compass and failing to follow it.

Failing to put safeguards into place. Failing to adhere to your established safeguards. Having too much on your plate, and I'm not talking about food here, well, I am talking about food, but I'm also talking about just stuff to do. Just saying yes to many things. Having too much stuff to do. I'll raise my hand, this is one of my challenges that I'm working through right now in my life. I'm dealing with this because I want to say yes to everybody. I don't want to say no to anybody, but I have to because as my friend, Michael Hiatt, likes to say, "You can do anything you want, but you can't do everything you want." Wise words.

Poor oversight or management of others. There's been times in my career I've been managing people now for a long time. A lot longer than I care to admit. One of the challenges I've had over the years is allowing people so much freedom that they don't feel that they have any restrictions. That's another thing that I'm working on, is learning to put boundaries in place and do it in a loving caring way and keep the feeling and atmosphere of family in our business, but yet have clear boundaries that we all-- We all know it makes everybody feel better and we know what we're supposed to do and what we're not supposed to do. Having better oversight can prevent lots of mistakes from happening.

Insufficient training will fall into that category as well. Partnerships with people who don't share your values. There's a verse in the Bible that says, "Don't be unequally yoked with somebody who doesn't share your values." I'm not saying that I can't do business with somebody who's not a Christian. I do business with people who are atheists, who are Muslims, who are Jews, who are, I don't know what they are. They are people. That's all they are. They're people just like me, person.

I'm not talking about religion here, I'm talking about our code of values of things that we value in life and in the world, and making sure those things match up. Like if some of my values are honesty, integrity, punctuality, doing what I say I'll do, and the other person in the relationship is lying, doesn't have any integrity, changes with every breeze of the wind, doesn't show up on time, doesn't do what they say they'll do. That's going to cause mistakes and problems. Then there's Murphy's Law.

I used to hate when people would quote Murphy's Law because I would just say, "You're making a negative declaration over your life. Why would you do that?" I think that recognizing Murphy's Law is, I don't know how you want to think of this. You could think of it as chaos, you could think of it as the second law of thermodynamics, which says that every orderly system will descend gradually into a less orderly



system into total chaos eventually. That's one way of summing up the second law of thermodynamics.

You could say that it's the work of the enemy, of the devil, the unmaker trying to unmake things. Murphy's Law says, I'm sure you know it, "Whatever can go wrong will go wrong." While I don't think it's a philosophy to live your life under, I think it is a good way to have a filter to put things through and just say, well, what can go wrong and what can we do to prevent it from going wrong? If it does go wrong, what can we do to prevent the damage that it might cause from happening? As you think through this list of causes of mistakes, notice that all of them are avoidable, except the last one, Murphy's Law.

If we have diligence, if we have honesty, integrity, attention to detail, demonstrate genuine care for others, having good systems and processes in place and following them, we can usually avoid most mistakes. Mistakes are avoidable. Obviously we want to do everything we can to avoid mistakes from happening in the first place, but whether we've taken the proper precautions or not, mistakes will be made. Remember that from the White House politics? Mistakes were made. You're going to make mistakes. I'm going to make mistakes.

What do we do? How do we recover from a mistake gracefully? Well, I have five suggestions. Five steps for recovering from a mistake gracefully. Number one, assess the damage. Figure out how much damage you've done, how many people does it affect? How serious is the damage? What will its impact be on your business? It's one thing if you order envelopes with the wrong logo on them, that's maybe not a good thing, but it's not terrible. It's another thing if you embezzle money from a company. That's not even a mistake, that's a sin. But you could argue it's a mistake because you're under stress, you're tired, you're desperate. You've got to figure out what the impact is on your business on other people. How will it influence the way people see you? Especially if this seems more serious and it seems like you've done a lot of damage, then seek the counsel of others so you don't underestimate the potential damage. In fact, seek the counsel of others regardless of whether you think it's a big deal or not. Because often, the mistakes that are the biggest deal are the ones we don't think are a big deal. We're just like, "Why are you so upset? You're being irrational." By the way, don't say that to somebody in the heat of an emotional discussion. It's the wrong thing to say, every time. Step one is to assess the damage to see how much damage you've done.

Step two is own up to the mistake. Own it. So often, our immediate response, when we are exposed in having made a mistake, is to defend ourselves. We want to make excuses or blame somebody else or come up with some reason why, "Well, I asked their advice and they told me to do this and I did it and it didn't work. It's their fault." Most people won't come out and say it like that, but most people at one time or another will find a way to passive-aggressively blame other people for their own mistakes. I know you wouldn't do it, and I wouldn't do it, but maybe there's somebody you know who would. Perhaps, somebody you know very well.



These responses to want to defend ourselves or lay the blame somewhere else are almost irresistible. They come naturally, especially if the mistake was unintentional. By the way, let me be clear, I keep saying some things are mistakes and some things are sins. A mistake I think is something you did unintentionally or through carelessness. Something you did intentionally is a sin. That's my opinion, and you might hate that term, you might not like it, but I think we can all agree that there are some things that are wrong to do. I can say they're wrong or I can say they're transgressions or I can say they're sins. It's all saying the same thing. You have a standard that you live by and you've fallen way short of that standard. None of these responses-- I don't want to get off on a discussion about, is there such a thing as sin? Let's save that for a different podcast.

None of these responses trying to avoid admitting it or trying to keep it hidden or defend yourself or make excuses or blame somebody else, none of these responses help you recover. Instead, they will make things worse. Think of Bill Clinton, own the mistake. Take full responsibility for it, even if it was committed by someone else in your business. This is something I've had to do a few times. Somebody in my business would make a mistake and I'd have to go to a client or a customer and say, "I take full responsibility for this, this is my fault, the buck stops here." Because I think there's nothing more despicable than when a business owner blames some junior person on his team for the mistake that has been made. I think that's chicken shirt. You fill in the blanks. Just own it. In fact, I'm going to give you some language for how to deal with handling this situation in just a moment.

Let's go to step number three though. Step number three is make it right. This might be as simple as just offering a sincere apology, but other times, as anybody who's married knows, sometimes an apology is just not going to feed the bulldog. That comes from a saying that-- I don't know if you ever heard the saying, but in the south, where I grew up in southeast, we had a saying about, if you're really mad at somebody and they said they're sorry, I would say back to them, "Well, sorry don't feed the bulldog, pal." Yes, it's just a Tennessee thing, I think.

Sometimes a sincere apology will really repair the damage. Sincere means you actually apologize for the damage that was done. Let me just give you a hint. A sincere apology does not sound like this. I'm so sorry that you were so sensitive about that you got upset. That is not an apology. That is blaming them for their own misery. An apology is, I'm sorry, I was a jerk and said that mean thing to you. Just so you know what a real apology sounds like.

If you're in doubt about whether the apology was enough, make some kind of expression of goodwill, maybe you offer a refund or something for free is an expression of goodwill. If in doubt, you could just try something really complicated. You could ask the person whom you have hurt. You could say, "What can I do to make this right? What can we do to get beyond this?"

Step number four, look for the hidden gem. Quite often, if you make a mistake but you try to make amends graciously, you'll find some unexpected blessing in the



whole situation. Your gracious, open, and undefensive response to a mistake can demonstrate to other people the depth of your commitment to them. The soundness of your integrity, or the extent of your care, your love, your concern. Look for that hidden jewel and make the most of it. I'm not saying make the most of it as in take advantage of people, I mean appreciate that good things can even come out of bad situations.

Number five. Put safeguards in place. If you're unsure of how the mistake happened, then figure it out, because it's always figure-outable. It's usually pretty obvious. If you can't see how you made the mistake, just ask the person you're married to, they'll tell you, or ask your business partner or ask your team if you've created an environment of open discussion and candor and your team is not afraid of you, which by the way if they're afraid of you, you've made a mistake somewhere along the way. Then you can ask them, "Help me see how I made this mistake." You've got to be sincere. If people feel like you're trying to trap them into saying something that will make you angry, which I know is weird but people behave this way, then they won't talk to you. Figure out how the mistake happened, and put systems and processes in place to prevent that from happening again.

Here's a very simple example. If you are an alcoholic and you slip up one day and you go to a bar to get a hamburger. You have no intention of drinking but you end up drinking getting drunk and blowing your sobriety and just totally messing up, what can you learn from that situation? Drunks don't go to bars to get hamburgers. That's the new policy.

Once again, the five steps for recovering from a mistake gracefully. Number one, assess the damage. Number two, own up to the mistake. Number three, make it right. Number four, look for the hidden gem in the situation. Number five, put safeguards in place to prevent the mistake from happening again. I promised you earlier that I would give you the words to say if you're trying to own up to and make situation right. I don't want to turn this into a formula, I actually picked up this language pattern from Michael Hiatt. But I want to be careful to advise you, don't turn this into a formula. This is not a technique to use on people. This is just to convey the feeling that you want to communicate to them. It is something like this, "Look, I'm really sorry that I made that mistake. That must have hurt and it was wrong of me to do that. I'm sorry and I'm asking you to forgive me." It's important for us to ask for people's forgiveness, because so often we don't do that. We try to sweep things under the rug. Some of us are masters of sweeping things under the rug. Some of us have mountains of stuff underneath the rug. You can't even walk on the rug anymore. You trip over it every time you go through that room.

How far can I carry this metaphor? Don't sweep things under the rug. Say you're sorry, mean it, admit what you did, admit that it probably hurt them. Show them that you understand how they probably feel about what happened, and then asks them for their forgiveness. I have yet to have anybody tell me, and I have had to make that speech too often, but I have had to make it a few times. Probably more times than I want to admit. But I've never had anybody say, "No, I don't forgive you." Now, I have



had at least one time somebody say, "I'm going to forgive you but I need some time." That's okay. That's fair.

That's how you recover from a mistake gracefully, and just remember the final step. Once you've made a mistake and you've recognized it and you've recovered from it, don't make it again. For crying out loud. How about you? Do you have suggestions or thoughts on how you recover from mistakes or how you prevent that from happening in the first place? You could share that in the comments at rayedwards.com/358, for this episode number. I just want to mention one more time that this episode is brought to you by the all-new Ray Edwards endorsed service provider and certified copywriter program now open for applicants. This is where I help anybody who wants to make big money from their writing. Do that and you can do without getting a publisher or having a best selling novel or being a celebrity sports figure or being a Kardashian. Even if people don't even know who you are, you can make money from your writing. It is possible. Get more information. Get an application, see if this is a good fit for you. Go to edwardscertified.com. That's edwards, E-D-W-A-R-D-S, certified.com.

That's it for this week's show, we'll be back again next week. Until then, my prayer for you is that you would enjoy long life, prosperity, peace for you and peace for your house.

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