



*Your best teacher is your last mistake.*  
Ralph Nader

*The proactive approach to a mistake is to acknowledge it instantly, correct and learn from it.*  
Stephen Covey

## Positive Error Culture

= **Errors are not taboo; there is no failure only feedback; mistakes are steps on the road to success; it's OK not to know yet.**

### How It Works

The airline industry has a positive error culture. It has to. Lives are at stake. Employees at all levels are able to share their errors so that they can be addressed and other people prevented from making them. The healthcare industry is less positive. It should be more so. Lives are at stake. Errors here risk legal action and shame and therefore a reticence to reveal what's happened. Then the error isn't fully addressed and other people are less likely to avoid the situation.

### Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes

Developing a positive error culture requires people to have the confidence to understand and accept their mistakes; skills to make them right and the perseverance to keep trying if the right result remains elusive. This happens more easily when everyone in the organisation has a shared understanding of the behaviours and values of a positive error culture: we know that if we share our mistakes, we all learn more.

#### 1. Ethos

AGREE a **constitution** for a Positive Error Culture by co-negotiating:

'How do we respect, value and use errors for learning?'

'How do we make it safe to fail and OK to struggle?'

#### 2. Language

DEVELOP an **expected language** of hard work and struggle:, e.g.:

'I'm having a Purposeful Moan'

'I'm struggling to succeed'

'I'm looking for value in this mistake'

#### 3. Pit Stop

PLAN IN **short pauses** to review, mistakes, learning, struggle, frustration:

'How have you been struggling?'

'Is this the correct level of challenge for you?'

## Applications

- Specific and challenging subject material
- New and difficult subject material
- Behaviours in school
- Behaviours out of school
- New social/academic situations
- For peer coaching
- For peer teaching

*How do very young learners relate to mistakes in school? Maybe in the same manner that errors are addressed at home?*

## Extensions, Adaptations, Variations

- Apply the same process of development to a 'Positive **Learning** Culture' or a '**Future-focussed** Learning Culture'
- Create a flow chart describing how to respond to mistakes. Make sure to include decision diamonds at which point the student chooses whether they will be demotivated by the mistake or empowered by it.

*For younger learners, observe how they persevere with a difficult task. Think about the children in terms of perseverance, struggle, resilience.*

### *Test It Out*

*Develop your +EC ETHOS. What questions will you ask:*

#### 4. Turn To

TEACH students to **turn towards their errors** not away from them. Have them think positively about what's gone wrong and what needs to happen next. Judge when it's time for you to offer the correct answer.

#### 5. Feed Back

TEACH students that an error is just an outcome different from the one expected. It's feedback. Expect them to **find value in all feedback** - whether it's about a mistake, a success, a failure or if it's a celebration.

#### 6. Model

SHARE your own learning struggles, setbacks, failures, frustrations and ultimate successes. Make the process clear. **Be authentic, genuine and appropriate** in the examples that you choose.