



Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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Step 10: The Big Mistake of "No Mistakes"

Chapter 10 opens Part Four. This is one of my favorite parts, and it touches on one of the weaknesses and at the same time one of the opportunities of what we might call modern humanity. It is a place where we are weak as a culture, as supposedly enlightened people, and at that very same place lies the opportunity to rise above ourselves and become a much more successful version of who we are.

This is also where the great importance of mistakes comes into focus.

The message of this chapter is clear and direct: those who do not make enough mistakes live their lives in quite a big mistake. This is a fundamental statement. There is a fundamental misunderstanding here, one that does not even align with basic logic.

In other words, it is not difficult to demonstrate, even in a very logical way, that if a person is overly cautious about mistakes, they very quickly reach a state in which they make many more mistakes. Even during performance, when a person is too preoccupied with avoiding mistakes, their performance suffers and becomes much less effective. And also in situations where a person must make a decision, must create change, and if they do not make the decision or take the step, life will do it for them, and not in a pleasant way. That is a mistake.

And this is a mistake we want less of. And rightly so. We want more of the other kinds of mistakes, the mistakes that are not necessarily mistakes. Mistakes that, in the immediate moment, may appear to be errors, but in the long term turn out to have led to opportunity, to the opening of doors that were not possible before.

We want more of the mistakes that come from a person initiating more, creating more, trying more, responding more, improvising more, moving more, flowing more, participating more, laughing more, daring more. And within this entire repertoire, from time to time, things will not happen exactly as I wanted, and then I will think that this is a "mistake." But if I have already made progress in reducing excessive self-criticism, I may remind myself of the phrase "good mistakes," and that I should accumulate good mistakes.

A person who engages in creative activity knows that there are things that, if you do not do them several times, and each time make a few errors, you will not reach a good level of performance. You will not get there. It is not possible. Without mistakes, we remain small. We do not grow.

And here it is worth looking at the relationship we have cultivated with mistakes. What were we taught from a young age? That we must give the correct answer, that we must receive the correct grade, that we must repeat what the teacher says, that we must be “okay,” be “normal,” do things correctly, do things like everyone else, do what is expected, and not make mistakes.

Within a framework that sanctifies logical thinking, and alongside technological developments that are supposedly very precise, we can see many professions that rely on reducing intuition, reducing creativity, reducing spirituality, and even reducing human reflex, supposedly in order to reduce mistakes.

And what is the price of this? A much greater mistake. The breakdown of humanity. The breakdown of human wisdom, which ultimately leads to far more severe mistakes.

Because when an atmosphere of fear is created, along with excessive checking of what I do or do not do, whether I made a mistake or not, together with processes of “learning from mistakes” that go too far, with the constant creation of more and more rules to prevent mistakes, gradually human spontaneity is reduced.

Sometimes we will conduct analysis and reflection and not realize that part of the reason something failed is that we conducted too much analysis. We reach a point where, in a certain field of activity, we are afraid to make mistakes. We no longer listen to our inner wisdom. It is not present. It is not considered.

This can be a major mistake. A heavy price.

Of course, there are different kinds of mistakes. There are mistakes we truly do not want, and there are mistakes that are beyond our control. But here I am speaking about an approach. An orientation. An orientation that exaggerates the fear of mistakes to such an extent that the person paralyzes themselves. To the point where they are afraid to give answers, afraid to make assessments, afraid to raise hypotheses, afraid to try, afraid to initiate, afraid to take important steps in their life.

Because they sanctify the fear of mistakes. It becomes a kind of temple. A temple of fear, maintained consistently and systematically by excessive self-criticism.

A person who is governed by fear of mistakes is a person who suffers, and at times also a person who is dangerous to themselves and to others. They live according to a code of fear. And where a person lives according to a code of fear, the fear manages them. They struggle to connect to compassion, to hope, to optimism, to creativity, to spontaneity, to initiative, to the ability to improvise in response to what life presents to them.

When we are less afraid of mistakes, we listen to our intuition. And then we become more precise. We become more aligned with what our psyche needs. We spend fewer resources on defense. We move forward, we initiate, we act, we learn as we go, we adjust through experience, and we understand our path more clearly.

But when we exaggerate the importance of mistakes, we do not adjust as we go. We simply stop everything and try to do everything possible to avoid mistakes.

And then we forget what the right hemisphere of the brain knows: that an important part of doing, of development, of growth, of correction, and of healing, passes through paths that at first seem unsuitable. It cannot happen otherwise. From time to time, we must step out of the familiar path in order to discover a more accurate, broader, and more suitable path for us, because the path is constantly changing, evolving, and developing along with us.

If we go on a long journey and carefully map out in advance every path and every turn, what will that journey truly look like? And if we deviate from the plan, does that mean we have ruined the journey? Or perhaps it is *אקרה* through deviation that we encounter something no one else has seen, something we were not supposed to see, something that is important to us but we did not know it existed, and we discovered it only because we deviated, only because we were open to making a “mistake.”

And here we must be careful. Excessive self-criticism creates a narrative of logic that explains why it is so important not to make mistakes, because otherwise “terrible things” will happen. And this narrative accumulates, and accumulates, and accumulates, until we find ourselves living inside a film of fear, with few mistakes but also very little freedom, very little joy, very little pleasure, and very little fulfillment.

Excessive self-criticism leads to the creation of too much hesitation, to the creation of barriers that are too strong against our inner voice, against our intuition, against our creativity, against the beautiful things in life, against love, against passion, against pleasure. Everything gets lost there, often without us even noticing.

So I return again to the sentence with which we opened: those who do not make enough mistakes live their lives in a big mistake.

And as I become more tolerant, lighter, and even more humorous toward my small mistakes along the way, I begin to learn their value. I even begin to look for them. I initiate more. I am already prepared for the fact that something will not happen exactly as I planned.

And then I ask: what do I “gain” from this mistake?

And the answer is: when this is my approach, I gain a reduction of excessive self-criticism. I gain access to my creativity. I gain a connection to the taste and meaning of life. To all those good things that are lost when I sanctify the fear of mistakes.

And this, as I said, is one of the places where the modern world is weak: excessive self-criticism that is also excessive in its fear of mistakes.

But in that very place where we identify this ingrained habit, to fear mistakes in an exaggerated way, there also lies an opportunity. An opportunity for freedom. An opportunity for release. In the place where we create for ourselves a more flexible relationship and orientation toward this concept that we have constructed in a distorted way and called “mistake.”

Questions for Self-Reflection (it is recommended to answer in writing):

1. Give an example of a “mistake” that changed your life for the better. How does it feel to revisit that “mistake”?
2. In which areas of your life are you too cautious about making mistakes, and therefore avoid acting more freely?
3. What “good mistakes” do you wish for yourself to make in the coming months?
4. Are you able to forgive yourself when you make a mistake? Do you have a specific example?
5. Now that you are here, is there a “mistake” you are willing to take a risk on and experiment with, one that in the past you were less willing to approach?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about regarding what you have read in this chapter? Experiences? Insights? Questions? Feelings?