

Oops! When You Make a Big Mistake at Work



Everyone makes mistakes at work, but do you know how to manage these mini crises when they occur? The first rule is to remain calm and assess the true impact. If needed, determine how best to rectify the problem and bring the error, along with your suggested solution, to your boss. Get out in front of any work error rather than have it be discovered by others. Own the error when it's

yours. Learn the lesson from the mistake and commit to not repeating it. Apologize for your mistake. People usually accept a sincere apology and view it as a positive display of character. Avoid the self-punishment of ruminating over your mistake after you've taken all the necessary steps to resolve it.

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Soft Skill to Know: Employee Flexibility

Change can come quickly in the workplace. How well do you cope with sudden office moves, reassigned duties, taking on more work, or being removed from an unfinished project to start another one? You may have no control over corporate decisions requiring difficult change, and coping with this sort of stress requires learning to be flexible. Flexibility demonstrates tolerance, maturity, understanding, and a desire to engage with the organization. Responding to change with a cooperative attitude, an open mind, and a positive disposition is not easy, but it's a soft skill that's valued by employers. To become more flexible, see forced change as a new opportunity. This attitude will help you cope with stress, see the positive aspects of change, spot new opportunities, improve your skills, and perhaps discover new ways of experiencing work-life balance.

Enhancing Coworker Relationships with Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is your ability to be aware of your emotions, accurately perceive emotions in others, decide how to use this information, and act in ways that produce successful workplace relationships. Good EI helps you navigate conflicts, engage with others, and experience more job satisfaction. A few examples of EI in practice include: 1) Knowing that a missed deadline will create hardship for others, you decide to finish early, creating goodwill. 2) Sensing a coworker's frustration about some matter, you inquire about it rather than ignore it. 3) Knowing that your attitude affects others, you choose to project a pleasant demeanor despite how you actually feel. 4) Sensing a need to resolve tension between yourself and a coworker, you make the first move to resolve it. Learn more from *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book*, a primer of exercises for improving EI.

Bullying in the Workplace Others Can't See

Sometimes bullying can be missed by observers, but it's no less painful when the aggression is recognized only by the targeted victim, who understands the context. Would you recognize someone else's victimization? As a coworker, you may miss or overlook these acts, which can be as subtle as an aggressive sigh, the clearing of a throat, an uncomfortable silence, or a subtle movement designed to communicate disapproval or disdain. Because bullying victims often suffer in silence, coworkers can be an influential source of support if they are willing to practice personal courage. Step forward to find out whether a colleague is being victimized. Coworkers have a responsibility to notice their surroundings, see each other as part of a work family or team, and offer support. Trust your gut. Never side with bullying behavior. And don't succumb to the bystander effect—speak up and get involved.

Overcoming Loneliness

Lonely? Overcome loneliness by asking whether its cause is temporary or it's lingering too long. Taking action is the best path to overcoming loneliness—don't dismiss getting a short-term assessment by a professional counselor (through your Employee Assistance Program) for guidance and tips and to rule out depression, especially if you feel lethargic about creating change. Loneliness has two parts: the negative state of mind it produces and the circumstances you identify as the cause (isolation, absence of a close relationship, overcoming shyness, etc.). Each part can benefit from its own intervention—one part involving concrete steps and the other overcoming the negative self-talk that may undermine any action you want to take.

Fight Procrastination Better

Everyone procrastinates at times, but if another nail-biter of a deadline looms, and you swore never again, here are a few intervention ideas. First, realize that procrastination is a natural occurrence. Your brain is designed to avoid pain, and work registers in your brain as pain. You might initially motivate yourself with anticipated positive feelings of completing your project early, but your brain is more conditioned to appreciate rewards that are right here and now. Hence, you procrastinate. While now knowing how the brain works may inspire you to fight back, follow these steps to make it easier: 1) When you are assigned a task, act immediately in some way to create momentum. Simply organizing the steps needed to complete your project might be enough. 2) Break your tasks into manageable sections. This makes tackling a large task easier and helps prevent you from feeling overwhelmed—another pain point that invites your brain to procrastinate. 3) Plan how you will tackle each subsection. If your deadline is seven days away, complete one-seventh of the goal each day. Give yourself a small but meaningful reward for each step completed. 4) Plan and achieve some desirable personal goals that have nothing to do with your project during this period—chores, household projects, etc. These successes empower you and will transfer to your determination to complete the work on time. To learn more: hbr.org [search "beat procrastination"]