Reacting to Failure

**Facilitator**

**Guide**

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| Overview | Reacting to failure focuses on the *reaction* we have when we encounter mistakes or problems in others. Effectively responding to failure is a critical leadership skill today and the focus of this module. Subsequent modules will focus on the response. |
| Objectives | 1. Identify healthy leadership characteristics when reacting to a failure of a report or team. 2. Apply these characteristics to case studies where failure has occurred. 3. Assess how you react to failure and develop a strategy to apply the principles discovered in this module. |
| Resources needed | This facilitator guide  * + Reacting to Failure Self Study guide   + Reacting to Failure PowerPoints |
| Timing | 1.5-2.5 hours depending on the number of activities chosen |
| Competency Connection | Managing Risk  * Accelerating Development * Empowering the Team |
| Related modules | Complete these modules before conducting this module:  * Leadership Foundations * Role of the Leader |
| Other general instructions | Prework Send the participant guide (self-study) to each participant and ask them to read through page 6. This includes the story of the engineer and several perspectives on failure. Identify your examples and insert these as needed. |

*New Reality Leadership*

**Facilitator Overview**

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Leaders coach employees in a variety of situations. One challenging area is coaching when others have failed to perform the right way, make an error, or make a poor decision. Leaders have tremendous opportunities to positively impact the work environment by the way they ***initially react*** to these situations. Although we prefer not to have these adverse situations, we can view them as learning opportunities. This module provides viewpoints, an assessment and case studies to help leaders evaluate how they react to these situations and develop a plan to respond in ways that will positively impact the person or organization.

This session is about 1.5 to 2 hours depending on the amount of content you chose to use. Send the self-study guide ahead of the meeting and ask them to read through page 6 and complete the assessment. (Depending on your group, you can add or delete prework)

Find related examples in your organization. Ensure you do not incriminate any current leader. You may want to share a couple of personal examples, either positive or times when you reacted poorly.

This module focuses only on the ***reaction***; subsequent modules focus on the response. If you desire to do several modules together, combine this module with Effective Feedback and Difficult Discussions.

We continually connect back to the principle in the Role of the Leader module of ***maximizing the potential of all employees in an accelerated way***. Keep this view in mind as you facilitate the module and make the connection between how a poor reaction reduces the ability of an employee to perform and stunts their development. An effective response propels growth and the ability to maximize employee performance.

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# Reacting to Failure

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| Activity Type and Timing | Facilitation Steps |
| Illustration3 min | **Open with an illustration**  Pick an illustration you have seen to share with the group or use this one to get started:  *A contractor was building a home and had several employees working for him. He did not understand the concept of how to react through failure. His responded harshly to the crew when they made mistakes. He hired 11 people and lost nine during the five months it took to build the house and lost $20,000.00 in the process. Today, we will discover a few changes this contractor could have made to improve the employee engagement and his profits greatly. We will apply that to our leadership and connect this principle to bottom-line business improvements.* |
| Objectives3 min 2 slides | **Share objectives and agenda** |
| Exercise5 min to discuss examples 5-10 min to debrief | **1. Reacting to Mistakes: What is at Stake?**  Intent: See slide Reacting to Mistakes: What is at Stake? The goal of this exercise is for participants to identify times they have seen this skill used well or not used well and to highlight the **impact** they observed.  Break them into small groups to share examples. You are free to adjust the exercise approach for any exercises based on your group size and learning style.  **Debrief Exercise**  Ask each group for several examples of their discussion. Chart the **impact** of the response. On one chart, write the positive impact and on another chart, write the negative impact. |

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| Recap of Models3-5 min | **2. Connecting to the Leadership Principles**    Development  Organizations must ***accelerate*** the development of employees vs. just letting them learn at a leisurely pace.  Ask participants how reacting to failure supports these two concepts  As you facilitate this module, connect each activity and exercise back to these models. Our goals are to maximize the performance of employees in an accelerated way. Reacting effectively to failure is a skill to accomplish this goal. (you can adjust timing where you connect to these models) |
| Assessment 5-10 min | **3. Reacting to Failure Assessment**  If they have not already completed the assessment, give a couple of minutes to do so now. Explain that this is for their personal use and will not be shared. The results help them determine focus areas for them in this topic.  You do not want to make participants uncomfortable with sharing negative results. However, often participants will open up and share challenges they face in this area. Be sensitive not to force it but allow it to flow in a way that enhances the key points. |
| Discussion 5-15 min | **4. Perspectives on Failure**  Intent: Review perspectives from other leaders on views and benefits of failure. This discussion is optional and listed are a couple of facilitation suggestions.  Provide time for the class to review the perspectives and have them highlight key words or thoughts in the article. When you debrief, ask for their keyword or thought and why they chose that word.  There are four short articles. Have folks read just one of the 4 and provide a keyword or thought.  Or, provide a color piece of paper to them and have them write the thought on the paper with a marker. They could do a positive or negative view. Have them explain the thought or word and then tape it to a chart. Provide one chart for positive views and a second for the negative views. |
| Slide and Poster: Reacting to Failure5 min There are 2 slides  Place a poster of this slide on the wall for reference | **5. Reacting to Failure Model**  Effective leaders learn not to avoid discussions or react too quickly/harshly. They will inquire and listen first without judgment and then determine an appropriate response.  Facilitation options  Show slide. Pair up participants and let them discuss the model for 1-2 minutes. Ask them for a couple of points from their discussions.  Or, if your group is not too large, have them gather around the poster on the wall. Ask them to reflect on the model. Ask for a few reflections and discuss briefly.  Emphasize that our natural tendency is to prejudge and react without getting all the information. Taking a couple of extra minutes to inquire to find out the full situation is a leadership approach that creates engagement. |
| Case studies~8 min | **6. Case studies**  Intent: Obtain a broader view of this concept through case studies.  Divide participants into groups of 3-5 people. There are two sets of cases. Assign groups different cases. If you have two groups, have one do the building case and one the plant case. If there are more groups, have a couple of groups do the building cases, etc.  These are real cases. The answers are in the back of the facilitator guide. Ask them to read on their own before looking at the answers. You can also substitute other cases from your experience. |

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| Case study debrief10 min | **Debrief the cases**  Ask the group to share their case and what the leader did. Have them share suggestions for the leader. Ask others for additional insights. Consider charting some of the ideas to capture effective ways to handle these types of challenges.  As a facilitator, emphasize that a slight change in the response makes a significant positive impact. |

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| Review tools5 min | **7. Tools and Checklists**  Encourage them to print these pages and post in their office or another conspicuous area for reference.  Could ask them to peruse through the two pages and see if there are other items they would like to add based on their learnings so far. |
| Personal workbook time3-5 min | **8. Application Exercise**  Have them work in their workbooks to answer the two questions called Application Exercise. This time is for personal reflection.  You can ask for a couple of examples or move on to the next segment. |
| Journal5 min | **Review the journal page**  Ask them to journal their responses to mistakes over the next month or so and to write down the challenge or error encountered and how they responded.  Ask them to review the assessment to see what they should focus on to improve this skill.  If possible, have a follow-up session to review the application of this skill. This session could be attached to a future session or leadership meeting.  If they are a leader of other leaders, encourage them to conduct this session with their team. |
| Optional: Org assessment10 min | **9. Organizational View Assessment (Optional)**  If time permits, have them complete the assessment from an organizational view vs. a personal perspective. This activity can be done individually, in groups, or as a large group going through the assessment questions. The value of this exercise is to highlight that organizations have cultures that sometimes lean toward one end or the other in how they respond to failure. Some organizations are risk-averse and react strongly to mistakes. Others are learning organizations and have more of a learning and coaching mindset. Help the leaders see that they can still effectively respond even if the organization does not have this mindset. |

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| Discussion10 min | **10. Competency Focus**  Intent: Connect to the competency module and link to relevant competencies that are related to Reacting to Failure. If the leaders are working on competency development, it is helpful for them to see how this module will improve these associated competencies.   * **Increasing Prudent Risk Taking** * **Accelerating Employee Development** * **Helping employees work independently or Interdependently** * **Shifting control and decision making to the front line**   Show the chart and ask how reacting effectively to failure impacts these competency areas. |
| Close10 min | **11. Summary and Application**  Review the objectives. These are written as questions for a short group reflection and discussion.  Ask for one insight they can apply in their leadership.  There are optional quotes. Can show these or intersperse them during the session.  Reflect on the session for follow-up actions. Think about next steps to reinforce this concept with the group and how you can provide reminders in subsequent training or meetings. For example, have them journal their interactions and then review these in a meeting or during the next training session. |