

## Reframing Mistakes

Encourage your mentee to embrace making mistakes – help them learn to see them as an opportunity to grow. Brain growth happens from mistakes, not in spite of them!

Be conscious about how you, yourself as a mentor, talk about mistakes or unintended outcomes. Negative reactions can lead to staying stuck on the failure.

Consider the following when exploring mistakes with your mentee:

- 1. Analyze mistakes together**
  - Talk through what happened
  - What steps can they take to avoid it in the future
  - Reinforce the *process* of getting to the right answer
- 2. Honour what they did right**
  - Dissect the mistake to explore the elements that were right
  - Help to focus their attention to the areas that need improvement
- 3. Talk about the feelings associated with mistakes**
  - Frustration and disappointment are normal reactions to mistakes – acknowledge them in order to get passed them
  - Once emotions are cleared, this allows them to move on to strategies to solve the problem
- 4. Push your mentee to bigger challenges when they are ready**
  - Learning doesn't happen when they repeat what they already know
  - Learning happens when mentees are pushed into solving problems
  - Keep the challenges reasonable
- 5. Share your own failures and mistakes**
  - Self-disclosure is a powerful tool all mentors possess
  - This helps to model the right behaviours and attitudes about learning
  - Talk about your own mistakes, feelings related to those mistakes, how you overcame them, analyzed the problem, tried different solutions, and ultimately persisted
- 6. Encourage mentees to ask for help when they get stuck**
  - There are many sources of support available – mentees need to know that reaching out for help is okay, not a sign of failure
- 7. Initiate the conversation – talk about mistakes before they happen. Consider the following questions:**
  - “How do you feel when you make a mistake?”
  - “How do you think other people see you when you make a mistake?”
  - “Have you ever discovered something new from making a mistake?”
  - “Has a mistake ever made you think more deeply about a problem?”
- 8. Be patient and understanding**
  - It may take time for your mentee to feel more comfortable talking about mistakes or adopting a growth mindset
  - Even mentees with a growth mindset can still take time to master a task

Source: [MINDSET Kit for Mentors – Using Mistakes & Failure to Your Advantage](#)