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## Mistakes Aren't Important. What You Do Afterward Really Counts!

Do you really think the people in your life, whether in business or your personal life, expect you to be perfect....always? You do? If they've told you that, then maybe you should get some new people in your life. Or, maybe you need to gain a more realistic understanding of what's expected of you.

"No one's perfect!" Boy, is that ever true. So, is your ego so big that you actually believe you can or should be.....perfect? Or, do you simply believe so strongly that you should be perfect for those who rely on you that anything less would be an injustice to them? Either way, that's a pretty big load to carry. And, carrying that weight tends to create difficulties in accepting when a mistake has really been made. I mean, if a person is so hell bent on not making mistakes, not doing what they are built to do, which is sometimes to be imperfect,

then their ability to accept an error would likely be distorted, as well. And, that inability often leads to a further challenge or lack of interest in identifying or recognizing simple errors.

Mistakes aren't really important. What matters most is the steps you take, or don't take, after you realize you made an error. Now, I'm not talking about mammoth errors, where lives could be at stake or where the world might fall off its axis. In those cases, different rules apply. I'm talking about the everyday minor toe-stepping type of seemingly little errors that happen all day long....the ones where a simple acknowledgement and apology suffice to resolve the issue for all eternity.

And, that's usually all it takes.....a simple acknowledgement, an apology that's equal in size and importance to the offense (short and simple when you step on someone's toe; lengthy, sincere, and accompanied by lots of flowers when you forget your wife's birthday or tape over your wedding video!).

Remember that relationships are like that old dentist commercial "Ignore your teeth and they'll go away!" Well, the same is true of relationships. Ignore other people's feelings and your relationships will go away. The same is not true with errors. By ignoring the mistakes you make, they won't go away but, your relationships might! That kind of stuff hangs around for a long time. People have long memories, especially when they feel that someone has negatively affected them or been insensitive. What...just because no one is talking about it, you think you're safe and that you got away with not having to acknowledge your mistake or apologize for it? Guess again, genius!

What's the big deal? I mean, why do so many people have such an incredibly hard time admitting an error and expressing an apology? Admitting an error is not a negative commentary on you as a person? It doesn't suggest that you're weak or inept. It only means that you're human and normal. In fact, offering an apology is a positive statement on you as a person. It says that you are self-aware, aware of others, truly concerned about how you might affect others, and that their feelings are important to you. So, the mistake doesn't define you. What you do AFTER the mistake does define you!

"But, what if your action wasn't a mistake? What if, even after the occurrence, you believed that your action was 100% correct, and that given the same circumstance you'd perform in precisely the same manner again? And, what if, given those assumptions, someone in your universe, whether business or in your personal life, felt wronged? Should you lie for the sake of the relationship and apologize, when you feel like you did the right thing? Wouldn't that be worse? Two wrongs don't make a right? Hell no! Here's where we go to a higher standard.

If you take action that is the right one, and someone else gets hurt in the process, why can't you feel solid in the action you took, commit yourself to do it again if necessary because it was truly the right thing to do, and still be considerate of the person who was negatively impacted? In a personal situation, a simple expression of concern for that person's feelings will often go a long way? In a business setting, an admission of the error and an apology for how your action impacted others carries a lot of weight.

Here's an equally large problem. Many people don't apologize, they just explain. "I know that you feel bad BUT, here's why I did it. And, now that you understand (intellectually) why I did it, you shouldn't feel bad (emotionally) anymore. So, everything's fixed now, right?" WRONG! Or, they blame others for their mistake. Yuck! With either of the above, your situation could quickly go from bad to either "I want a divorce!" or "We're firing your firm and hiring one that cares more about us than themselves!"

Let's face it, whatever the reason, when someone is negatively impacted by our actions (don't forget that people work at companies, and our actions affect them, their careers, and others), do they really care FIRST about why we screwed up? Or, is it something else? Of course it is! People want to be understood, heard, and valued, whether in a personal or business setting. If you're not important enough for me to take into account how my actions impact you, then perhaps we don't fit well together.

So, what's the solution? ACKNOWLEDGE AND APOLOGIZE! If not for your actions, then separate your actions from how they impacted others, and apologize to those people for how they were effected. Acknowledge that they were negatively affected, that you recognize that fact, that how they feel is important to you, that you don't want them to feel that way now or ever again, and that you want to find a solution that makes them feel better. If, your actions were warranted and might have to be repeated again, don't explain first. Resolve that persons emotional response to your actions first. Once that person sees that you really care, only then can you begin to address the foundational issue of the action itself, your reasons behind it, and devise a solution for the future. Perhaps more frequent communications, advanced notice, or an entirely new approach would avoid future misunderstandings.

People aren't perfect...they're human, and humans make mistakes. So, join the human race already! Accept responsibility for your errors, acknowledge them, apologize, devise a solution, and move on. And, be happy!

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