

# MAKING A MISTAKE

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## (P.S. It happens to everyone!)

An error is a mistake. It is the state of being wrong. Interestingly, perfectionism and making a mistake both share something in common; misinformed beliefs. Those beliefs focus on fear of failure (I need to be perfect) and of managing the internal consequences when a mistake is made (negative self-talk).

We mostly know when we have made a mistake and in the legal profession, the consequences can be glaring.

Mistakes occur for a multitude of reasons; poor decision making, being stressed, poor reasoning, incorrect judgement, being overwhelmed, failure to take care, making an oversight, or having a moment of carelessness. They happen to everyone.

Combined with the self-belief of 'perfectionism', the fallout of shame, embarrassment and self-questioning (how did I do that) can be overwhelming. Mistakes do often cause us pain or loss, whether that is through work or within relationships. Intrusive thoughts, establishing a cycle of negativity, going over and over the outcome and what you could or should have done better are some of the common processes.

One of the recommendations for managing perfectionism is to practice being emotionally tolerant. Easier said than done. However, this recommendation also applies for making mistakes.

Research suggests that when mistakes are made it is useful to analyse what went wrong and learn from it. No surprises there. The real trick is teaching yourself how to let go of these thoughts more quickly so they cease being intrusive. Here are some recovery tips:

1. Accept the mistake and assess why it occurred. Acknowledge it. Refer to the reasons above.
2. If you indulge yourself with intense ruminations, it will affect your next court appearance.
3. Check in with your own expectations. Do you have the right skill set? **Be honest, humble and prompt.**
4. Don't catastrophise.
5. Game plan: what do I need to do to prevent this happening again. Is this a pattern? Be proactive.

Remember: you are human and you need to be patient. A mistake does not define you.