

10 Tips for Embracing “Stretch” Experiences

Even those leaders who report that their greatest learning and successes came from mistakes often reward the very behaviors they want to avoid. Instead of being courageous and embracing failure’s lessons, many leaders’ unexpressed preferences and “rules” signal it is better to minimize or eliminate experimentation and risk-taking. As a courageous leader, remember that failure is not always bad or good. As you develop courage in yourself and others ask yourself the following questions.

Do you...

- ___ 1 Assess how you, your department and company embrace risk-taking?
- ___ 2 Experiment with possibilities and encourage others to do the same?
- ___ 3 Generate a multitude of options and iterative thinking?
- ___ 4 Tell the valuable lessons you’ve learned from your own mistakes (model failure)?
- ___ 5 Give others the latitude to explore possibilities?
- ___ 6 Look for more than one right answer?
- ___ 7 Take on a controversial point of view?
- ___ 8 Champion and protect the risk-takers in your organization?
- ___ 9 Push past your own comfort zone and embrace ambiguity?
- ___ 10 Celebrate failures as lessons learned?

Courageous leaders are not ones who seek a painless and well-traveled path to do what they’ve always done. Conservation choices, taking fewer risks and protecting the status quo lead to a lifeless, stagnant work environment. Instead, great leaders understand that playing it safe does not lead to innovation or success. Great organizations thrive when the culture inspires and rewards the courage required to take appropriate risks, experiment with new ideas, and make bold decisions.