Great-West Life
Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace

Dealing with Disappointment

Learning objective: This team-building activity helps team members develop skills to move beyond a disappointment.

Time required: Approximately 15-30 minutes, depending on group size.

Instructions: *Provide the brief introduction below and then ask team members to do the activity outlined**.** Note: Three years is usually enough time to have gained insight about a past disappointment. A more recent disappointment may not work for this activity.* ***If someone was recently passed over for a promotion, the suggested wording below should be modified*** *to a less personally painful example, such as a business closing down or some other disappointment.*

Ask each person to jot down a few notes so that they know which event in their lives they are referring to. If someone cannot think of an example, allow them to pass. Once they have written down the event, ask them to write their responses to the two questions below.

Suggested wording:
Imagine working hard for many years, maybe your whole career, in the same job and then a promotion becomes available. You feel this is finally your chance to move forward. Your co-workers seemingly all believe you deserve it and are behind you. And then you don't get the promotion.

It can be devastating.

What I'd like you to do now is recall a work-related disappointment from at least three years ago. It could be while working here or at a previous job. It could be a door that closed or an opportunity denied. It could be a project that was not successful or a plan that was shelved.

Next take a moment to write your answers to the following two questions, which I'll ask you to share.

1. What opportunities were eventually made possible after the disappointment?
2. How did the disappointment help you grow, develop or change?

Share your personal response and then ask for volunteers to share theirs. After everyone who wants to share has done so, move on to the following wrap up.

Suggested wording: Often what seems like a defeat in life can actually be a stepping-stone to something else. In the example shared about not getting a promotion, the individual decided to look for another job and ended up in a new and exciting career. Looking back, he realized that, had he been given the promotion, he would have stayed where he was and missed out on this amazing opportunity.

Understanding what good can come from a disappointment may not make it easier in the moment, but it can help us to gain perspective and put it behind us faster.