



Mistake Meetings

Learning objective: This team-building activity can help develop a sense of openness and trust amongst the team.

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

Instructions:

In a workplace where mistakes are concealed for fear of reprisal, hidden problems can become dangerous or costly. The goal for this activity is to imagine and work toward a workplace where mistakes are seen as part of learning, and solutions are shared among team members to prevent the same mistake from being repeated.

As a leader, you can set the tone by sharing one or more mistakes that you have made since the last meeting. Follow up by sharing how you corrected the mistake, or use this opportunity to ask for ideas to problem solve the situation. (If you think your team or workplace will react strongly to the word “mistake”, you can ask them to share a “challenge” instead; the intent would be the same.)

Ask the participants to be sure to have at least one mistake to share for this meeting. They can either share what they did to correct it or ask for help to solve a problem. Set the ground rules up front by stating that it’s not the intention to belittle or ridicule anyone for the mistake they choose to share.

In some workplaces, team members may be reluctant at first, but if you can be forthcoming in sharing your mistakes, over time this process can encourage people to be open about mistakes rather than trying to hide them. It also provides an opportunity for the team to help each other improve the quality of their work.

Activity developed with help from: Mary Ann Baynton, Mary Ann Baynton & Associates Consulting.