

How to Take the **ACHE** Out of Mistakes



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How to
Take the
ACHE Out
of
Mistakes

Kimberly Feltes Taylor & Eric Braun

Illustrated by Steve Mark

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Dedication

To the young people in my life who have trusted me to help guide them when they've made mistakes. And to my husband, Chris Taylor, for his endless love and support.

—KFT

For Henry and Fergus, whose abilities to grow from mistakes consistently inspire me.

—EB

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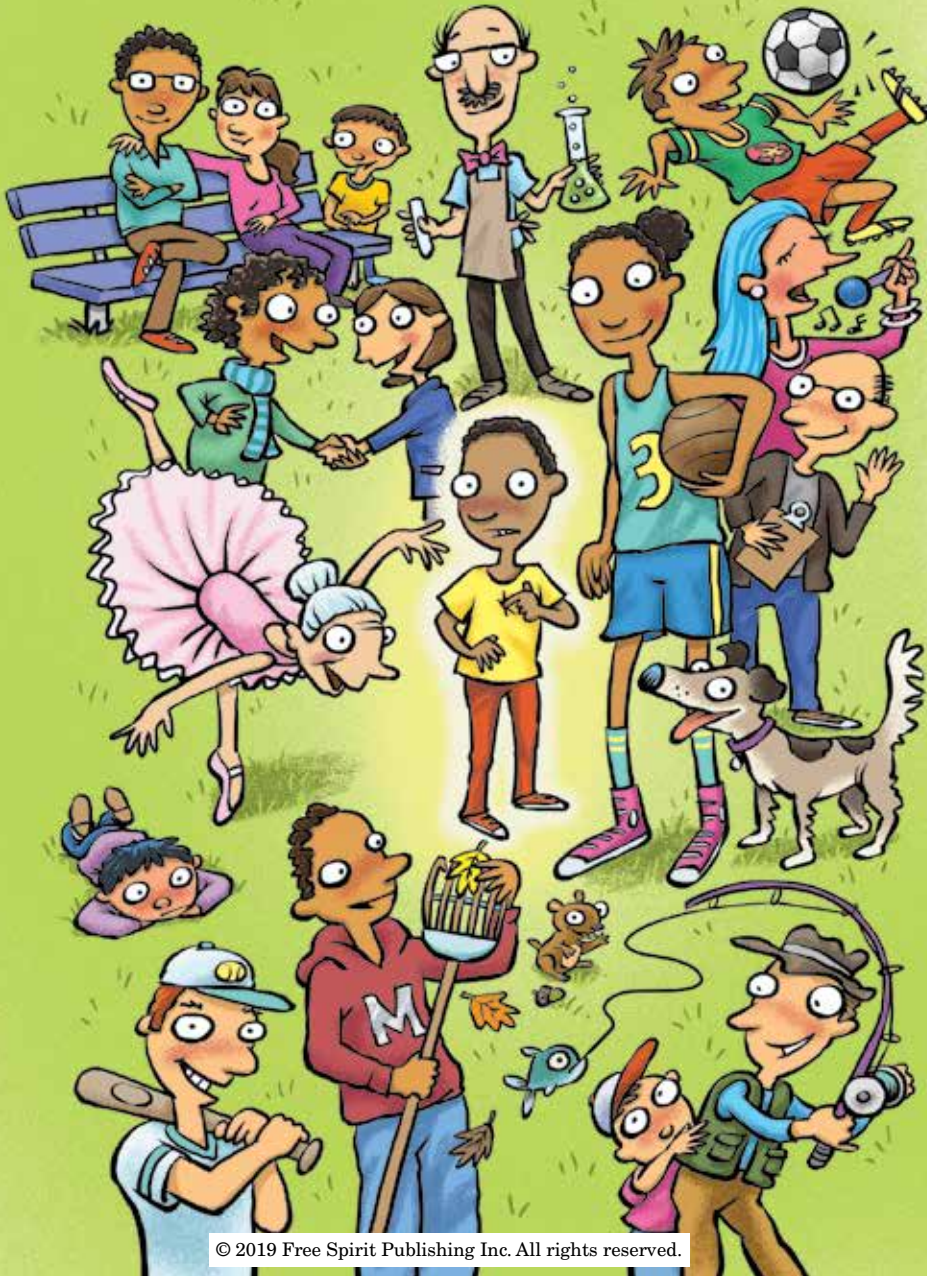
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Introduction: You Must Be Mistaken

You've probably heard people say, "Everyone makes mistakes."

And it's true—*everyone* makes mistakes. Your mom makes mistakes. So does your dad. And your teacher. Your principal, best friend, cousin, neighbor, Great Aunt Tutu, and your favorite sports stars and singers. The most popular internet video star of all time, the most famous movie stars, and every politician ever. (*Especially* them.)



So what's the big deal? If everyone makes mistakes, why do you need a book to learn about them?

Because not everyone knows how to handle mistakes. People might deny they made a mistake, or avoid thinking about it, or lash out at others, or get really mad at themselves.

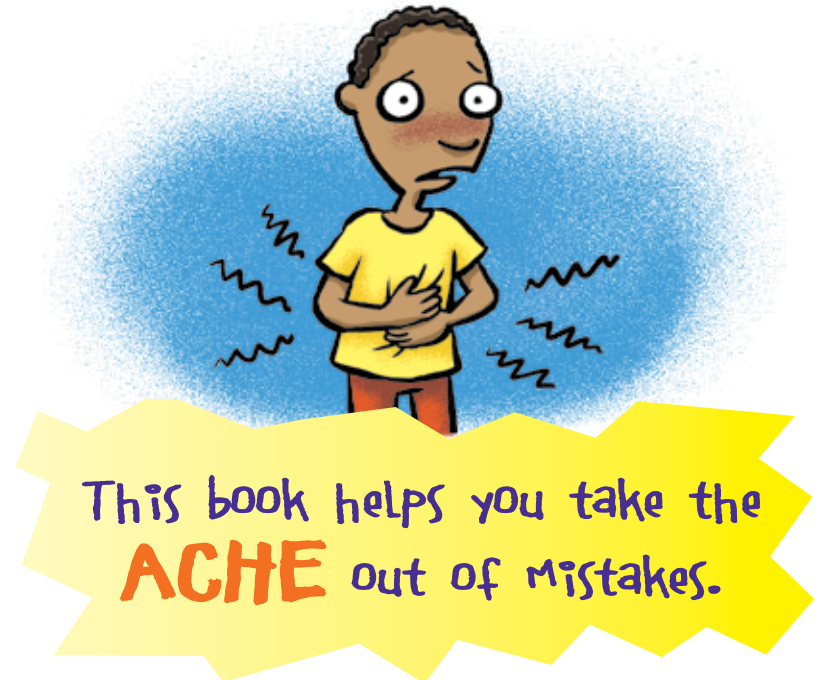


Because sometimes small mistakes can lead to bigger mistakes. And big problems. If we don't learn from our mistakes we miss a chance to do better.

Because sometimes making mistakes can leave you feeling embarrassed or all alone—like you're the only one who would do something so "stupid."

Because for some people, WORRYING about making a mistake is a real problem. They stress about being wrong. They get so wound up with worry they never try anything new because they don't want to mess up.

Sometimes making a mistake can give you a sick, twisty feeling in your stomach.



Mistakes come in all shapes and sizes, just like the people who make them. Some mistakes are small, like tripping over your own feet. Some mistakes are a little more important, like forgetting to walk the dog or ignoring a big school project because you just don't want to face it.



Mistakes can be accidents, like striking out in softball or getting a problem wrong on a math test. But did you know that sometimes people *decide* to make mistakes?

It's true. They might lie to a parent,* cheat on a test, or steal from a friend or a store. Their mistake was *choosing* to be dishonest. If they keep choosing to be dishonest, their behavior becomes more than a mistake. It becomes part of who they are.

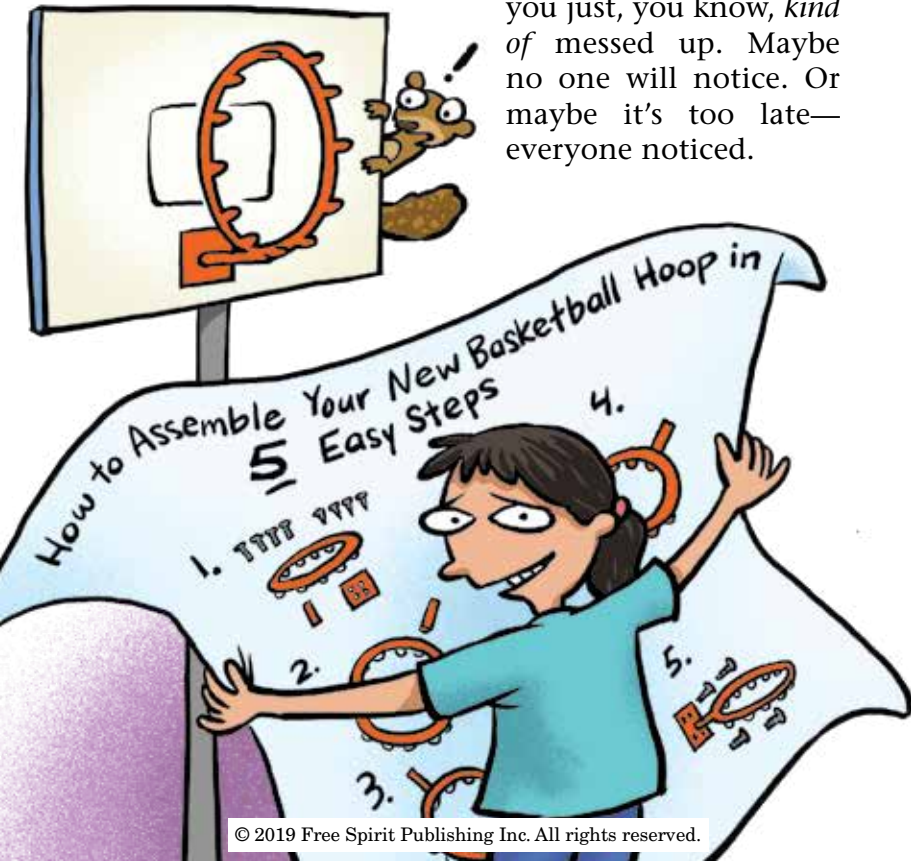
Sometimes when people make a mistake, all they want to do is get away—from the mistake and from everyone around them. However, hiding is *not* the thing to do. Instead, you can deal with your mistake in a way that helps you. You have the power to move on in a healthy way.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This book will *not* teach you how to *never* make a mistake again. That's impossible. It *will* teach you how to **own** your mistakes. It will help you **fix** them. It will also show you how to **learn** from them. And once you start owning, fixing, and learning from your mistakes, you'll feel smart, mature, and independent. Because you **ARE** smart, mature, and independent. Others will see you that way too—no mistake about it.

*When you see *parent* or *parents* in this book, think of the person or people who are raising you or who take care of you. That may be your mom or dad or another adult like a foster parent, a grandparent, an aunt or uncle—or whoever is most responsible for you.

How It Feels to Make a Mistake

Uh-oh, you blew it. You stumbled, bumbled, or fumbled. You messed up. You **really** messed up. Or maybe you just, you know, *kind of* messed up. Maybe no one will notice. Or maybe it's too late—everyone noticed.



Whether your mistake was big, small, or in between, it might not feel good. It might even feel really bad. Or you might be okay with making a mistake, knowing that it just means you're human. Most kids have a lot of different thoughts after making a mistake. Screwing up might lead you to think some of these thoughts:

I don't care, I didn't want to do that anyway.

I knew I'd screw it up. I don't know why I even try.

Not my fault!

I wish everyone would just leave me alone.

Ugh, I'm SO embarrassed!

\$€%#@#%\$!!!

I'm the worst.

I didn't get it right this time, but that's okay. No big deal.

Whoops. I'm going to try that again—I know I can do it.

Wow, that was really hard. But I'm proud of myself for trying.

Negative Thoughts

Did you notice that there are a lot more “red” thoughts than “green” ones? That’s because mistakes often cause us to criticize ourselves. And those negative thoughts can often be a lot stronger than other thoughts.



Our thoughts influence how we feel. So, if you have negative thoughts, you might have negative feelings. Have you ever felt the **ACHE** of making a mistake? You can feel that ache in different ways. After making a mistake, you may feel:

- embarrassed
- angry at yourself
- like everyone is mad at you
- guilty
- not good enough
- like everyone is staring at you

The ache can also be a real, physical pain that you experience. You may feel:

- sick to your stomach
- red and hot in the face
- sweaty
- shaky
- short of breath



And with different mistakes, you may react differently. If you accidentally call someone the wrong name, you may feel embarrassed for just a second and then move on. If you forget to meet a friend after school, you might feel embarrassed *and* guilty. If you drop your tray in the cafeteria at lunch, you might start sweating from embarrassment. You might want to run and hide. You might even feel bad about yourself, like you can’t do anything right.

How do you think you would feel if you made these mistakes?

The score is 1–0, and your team is losing. Only 15 seconds left. Your teammate passes you the puck, and you have a chance to make a goal. You swing your stick back, blast it forward, and . . . whoops! You shank it off to the side. Instead of tying up the game, you lose it for your team.



“Put on your clean black shirt for the concert,” your mom says. And then—uh-oh—you realize you didn’t put your dirty laundry in the hamper like she told you to. That black shirt is wadded up in the corner of your room, and it is *not* clean. Big mistake.



You didn’t study very hard for your social studies test—after all, you always do great in social studies. But when your teacher hands back the graded tests, you didn’t do well at all. Several other kids got a perfect score. You know you could have too. You really should have studied.

Your friend invited you to a sleepover at her house, and you said yes. But then a different friend invited you to a movie you’ve been dying to see. You blow off your first friend to go to the movie with the second friend—and the first friend finds out. Ouch!



Taking Control

No matter how you feel after making a mistake, it's okay to feel like that. Feelings are normal, and we can't control them. But we *can* control what we do after we make a mistake. Taking control and doing something positive can lead to more positive feelings. Sometimes those achy feelings help motivate you to do better next time.



Feel embarrassed that you missed that goal? Maybe you will practice more.

Do you regret not putting your dirty laundry in the hamper when you promised your mom you would? Next time you might remember that yucky feeling and try harder to remember.

Does blowing off a test—and getting a lousy grade—make you mad? Think about that next time you have a test. Maybe you'll study harder to avoid feeling that way again. That **ACHE** just made you a better student.

And what about getting caught lying to a friend? That can feel really bad. Shameful, even. Apologizing can help your friend *and* you feel better. Promising not to do that again—and *keeping* that promise—can lead to being an even better friend.

The Mistakes People Make After Making a Mistake

It's not always easy to make the right choice about how to react to your mistake. A lot of times, we feel so bad about our mistakes that we add to the problem with how we react. Some people . . .



Deny they made the mistake. "What are you talking about? I didn't leave the freezer door open."

Blame others. "You made me forget sunscreen!"



Pretend not to notice. "La la la, dum dee-dum-dum doo."



Give up. "I'll never be any good at this, so why waste my time? If I don't try, I can't fail."



Have you ever done any of these things? Have you done more than one of them? People often try to avoid responsibility for their mistakes in these ways. But as you can probably guess, that's not the healthiest way to react to a mistake. Instead, you can take the ACHE out of mistakes—that's what this book is about (duh).

The first step is understanding what *kinds* of mistakes people make. The next chapter will give you the run-down.