

# WHAT I LEARN'T LATE

52 LIFE LESSONS



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## 17. MISTAKES ARE PART OF LIFE

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**H**ow many times have you said, “*had I known*”? For many Ghanaians, this is a familiar saying after making a mistake. All humans make mistakes, and one should embrace this common human trait without embarrassment, even if there are several mistakes we regret.

I like to think of mistakes as nature’s way of telling me I’m not making the right choices, and teaching me a critical lesson about life. **Should I fail to learn the lesson at the point of committing the first mistake, nature will ensure I commit the mistake repeatedly until I get the point.**

So, whenever I make a mistake, I ask myself, “*what lesson is life trying to teach me?*” Usually, the answer leads me to say, “had I known!”. Indeed, mistakes make us wiser than before, and leave us better prepared for the challenges ahead of us. But, sometimes, we do not recognize the lesson life is trying to teach us on the first occurrence, even when we take the time to meditate and reflect on *why* the mistake happened. As a result, we may commit the same mistake a few more times before figuring it out.

Unfortunately, the Ghanaian school system has made us believe that mistakes are wrong. How? Well, I remember that in my days in primary school, we used to take a daily class test of ten questions. The student who made nine mistakes received a mark of 1/10 with a remark of “Poor”, while the person who made one mistake received a mark of 9/10 with a remark of “Excellent”. Now, I’m not against the school grading system, but the psychological effect of the remarks.

Instead of “Poor”, would it not have sounded more encouraging to use “Try again”?

Yes, “Try Again” should be our life’s mantra, a motivator that propels us towards excellence, a motivator that enshrines in us the desire for brilliance and distinction. So, as we go about our lives and commit mistakes, may we use affirmations such as “Try again” and “I can do better”, not only for ourselves but for others as well, to encourage ourselves and the people around us to move ever closer to excellence.

**I have come to accept and learn to look at mistakes as opportunities to become better by trying again and again, not by doing the same actions, but by knowing what to avoid in order to achieve the intended results.**

Here are the four steps I go through when I make mistakes.

1. *Acknowledge mistakes* – I admit and take ownership. I accept that I’ve done something wrong – no excuses, cover-ups, or denials.
2. *Reframe and analyse the mistakes* – Next, I change my perspective from moaning to focusing on the opportunity to learn. I ask questions like: What was I trying to do? What went wrong? When did it go wrong? Why did it go wrong?
3. *Try again* – Using the lessons I’ve learnt, I try again, doing things differently from what I did previously. It is this action that ensures I grow as a person.
4. *Review my progress* – Finally, after trying a couple of times again, I pause to evaluate and review my efforts to ensure I’m making progress.

The full book is available at [www.albertopoku.com/books](http://www.albertopoku.com/books)