

# Teaching For Success

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## *Dealing with Slumps, Bumps, and Lumps*

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### **You Made a Error? Now You're Learning!**

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**W**hat if you could control human performance to the nth degree and eliminate all error, mistakes, and blunders? Would you finally have reached teaching nirvana at the University of Shangri-La?

The practicality of living an errorless existence has been explored in many novels, short stories, and films. No matter the details, the results always seem the same: progress comes to a halt. The idyllic existence becomes a prison and the main character chooses to return to an imperfect world where he or she can live a more exciting—even though chancy and error-filled—life.

If error is a certainty and a constant companion throughout our lives, then one definition of success is learning how to transform errors and mistakes into allies instead of enemies. To do this, you need a personal philosophy that keeps you in control of your thoughts and feelings instead of letting failure push you off a cliff into a downward

spiral of depression and despair. An anti-downward-spiral philosophy might state: "Win or lose, correct or in error, I'm still me." Or, "I strive to minimize error, but upon encountering a situation that produces a result different from my plan, hunch, or wish, I'll use it as springboard to greater understanding and insight."

When I taught aviation technology, I told students who were afraid of making errors that the classroom and laboratory is where I wanted them to make mistakes, not out on the flight line where people might die or be injured.

Error teaches lessons to a depth that always getting it right cannot. I'd much rather have my plane repaired or piloted by a student who struggled for a B rather than one who breezed through with an A.

As a teacher, I learned that the cruelest mistake was thinking that making a class easy was doing students a favor.

Classes must be challenging enough to give every student a chance to learn from error. This does not mean building tricky test questions or testing on untaught material. It does mean expecting high performance and demonstrating how to deal with complex, confusing, or incomplete data. Then, you really are teaching for success. ✨













