



# Embracing Mistakes Through Story

**Share stories about innovations and successes that have come from mistakes, repeated attempts, and frequent failures, as well as simply by accident.**

## \* WHY

It's tough to convince strivers that mistakes lead to innovation and success because most of them have spent too much time feeling embarrassed and ashamed for making them. So they may not believe that mistakes should be valued. To counter that, we share stories of amazing accomplishments that have been made by people who haven't let failure stop them. We also point out accomplishments that have emerged entirely by accident. We need kids to understand that successful people rarely get it right the first time; to be successful we have to have confidence in ourselves, make an effort, and keep trying until we get results.

## \* WHEN

Share these stories throughout the year, but especially right from the start to nip kids' misconceptions about mistake-making in the bud.

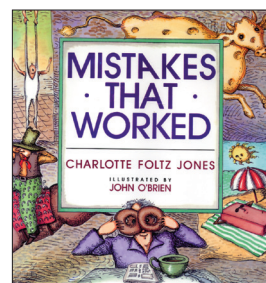
## \* HOW

Many great successes began as failures. Stories abound of extraordinary people who embraced mistakes, learned from them, and went on to change the world. Here are a few to share with your students.

1. Innovator, entrepreneur, and inventor Elon Musk started SpaceX, the first private company to transport cargo—and likely people one day—through space. The company began with one failure after another. The rocket exploded in each of the company's first three transport attempts, in 2006, 2007, and 2008, with several more

calamitous explosions as recently as 2016. Musk views these failures as a necessary part of innovation. Check out this website to see some of the explosions: [timeline.com/spacex-musk-rocket-failures-c22975218fbc](http://timeline.com/spacex-musk-rocket-failures-c22975218fbc). Kids will be enthralled. In 2015, SpaceX reached one of its most important goals: safely returning a vertical rocket to the ground. As of this printing, the company has had a number of exciting and successful launches. From each launch, the SpaceX team has learned something to improve the next one. Musk says, “When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favor.”

2. Henry Ford went bankrupt five times before inventing the internal-combustion engine and successfully manufacturing the Model A car.
3. When working on the light bulb, Thomas Edison famously said, “I haven’t failed. I just found 10,000 ways that didn’t work.”
4. In his book *Mastery* (2013), Robert Green says, “Think of it this way: There are two kinds of failure. The first comes from never trying out your ideas because you are afraid, or because you are waiting for the perfect time. This kind of failure you can never learn from, and such timidity will destroy you. The second kind comes from a bold and venturesome spirit. If you fail in this way, the hit that you take to your reputation is greatly outweighed by what you learn. Repeated failure will toughen your spirit and show you with absolute clarity how things must be done. In fact, it is a curse to have everything go right on your first attempt. You will fail to question the element of luck, making you think that you have the golden touch.”



Kids love stories of innovations that resulted by sheer accident: Post-it Notes, champagne, the Slinky, Silly Putty, Coca-Cola, and others. Choose those you would most like to share. For more stories of interest to kids, check out *Mistakes That Worked* by Charlotte Foltz Jones.