



# Study Guide

## *In Praise of Foibles*

*The Impact of Fear, Failure, and Mistakes on Continuous Improvement in Schools*

**Ron Nash**

This study guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. This guide is designed to help you reflect on and apply the ideas presented in the book, as well as apply the topics to different aspects of your professional development through self-reflection questions, blog ideas, student tasks and challenges.. Hopefully it will serve as a useful companion piece for individuals, small groups, or an entire faculty.

If you are interested in booking Ron Nash for a virtual training, professional development day, or to provide feedback on the book, please contact [pub@learningsciences.com](mailto:pub@learningsciences.com).

Learning Sciences International thanks you for your interest in this book.

## **Chapter 1: All they have to fear...**

“Fear is a powerful de-motivator; it keeps us from doing things and trying things that might otherwise bring a positive result...” (p. 2).

Here are some questions for back-to-school-for-staff week:

1. What effect does fear have on continuous improvement for students and teachers alike?

2. What are 3 techniques to create a classroom climate free of fear?

3. What are some possible reactions on the part of teachers who, along with everyone in the classroom, just heard a student make a mistake when answering a question in a whole-class setting?

4. How can administrators and staff members (all of them, including custodians, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers) work together to create a school-wide climate free of fear?

## Chapter 2: You call that a mistake?

Some questions for a school-wide blog accessible to teachers:

1. How can mistakes accelerate the growth process for students?
2. What personal and professional examples of mistakes serve as stories that can be shared in classrooms with students? (These stories might encourage students to share their own.)

In seated or standing pairs, students can discuss the following:

1. How can mistakes help us get better at something?
2. What is the difference between a mistake and an unforced error?
3. Share a mistake or unforced error you have made.
4. How can we learn from mistakes and unforced errors?





3. Why are listening skills so important in the workplace? Between teachers, students, and student-teacher interactions?

4. Why are pausing and paraphrasing critical listening skills? How do you use them with students?



## Chapter 5: I Used to Think...

1. Students are often immersed in right-answer-good and wrong-answer-bad thinking. What if we said, “I used to think, but now I think...” instead?

Here are a couple of conversations for colleagues at the next faculty meeting in seated or standing pairs:

1. How do we in education view wrong answers?
  
2. When teachers are ‘working the room’ while students work individually or in groups, how can they handle misconceptions on the part of students?
  
3. What are some “I used to think, but now I think” examples that could be shared in classrooms with students?



Here is a subject for a blog at the school level...

How can teachers change the physical and mental state of students frequently? (For example, humor is a mental state change. Getting students into standing pairs is a physical state change.)

...as well as one for a faculty meeting:

What did you dislike about what ineffective and manipulative teachers do when you were a student? (Don't do that.)

## **Chapter 7: Build Improvement Systems to Last**

1. What are the symptoms of a toxic classroom or school environment? How can you and your colleagues keep that from happening?
2. Why is the blame game counterproductive?
3. How can faculty meetings that are little more than information dumps be made more dynamic and effective as part of the continuous-improvement process?

4. Why is it important to be collegial as well as congenial in the schoolhouse?