



How to learn from experience

It has been said that there is no such thing as failure, or a mistake, just opportunities for learning. This is a method for how to learn from a past event that you have been involved in (perhaps leading a project, giving a presentation, taking part in a meeting, having a challenging conversation or encounter, perhaps something you regret.)

1. Take a sheet of paper. Draw four columns. The headings for the four columns are (in this order) a) Positives b) Learning and action points c) Learning and action points d) Negatives
2. Taking the positives first, think through everything about the event in question. What were you happy with? However small the detail, write it down.
3. In the second column, write down what *you* did that led to the positive in the left hand column. The idea is that you remember to keep these thought processes, actions and routines in your repertoire for future occasions.
4. In column four, write down the negatives. What were you not happy with? What did you forget to do? What did you not consider? Remember to consider your mental approach and self-talk, as well as your observable actions.
5. Now work down every point in the Negatives column, and consider what the learning might be. Define exactly what you would need to do to eradicate these problems from a similar event or scenario in the future, and write these as action points for yourself in column three. How can the Negatives list be reconstructed as positive advice, checklists and realistic goals for preparing for the future? You may well have discovered there are new skills you need to learn, or new resources you have to find.
6. Once you have done this, take a pair of scissors, and chop off the Negatives column and burn it or throw it away. It has now served its purpose in furnishing you with positive ideas for the future – reading and re-reading it now would only reinforce negative self-talk, so let it go. You are now left with a list of Positives, and constructive advice and ideas, a learning and action plan to follow. Look at the first column from time to time to time and remind yourself of your positives and successes!

This evaluation process is for learning, self-support, affirmation, and to help planning. Let go of the emotions surrounding your 'negative' experiences. Life moves on, and it is time for you to move on with it.

DATE:

POSITIVES

**LEARNING
& ACTION**

**LEARNING
& ACTION**

NEGATIVES