# Learning from Mistakes

## Writing Prompt #2

A favorite saying of mine is an old New Englander quote “Once burned, twice shy,”  which is simply a pithy way to say we naturally learn from our mistakes and that hard experiences are often the best teachers.

In this paragraph (again 300-350 words) choose a difficult experience from your life that taught you a good life lesson—and share the lesson you learned.

* Don't simply “tell” us what happened. In the setup and smacking gun use as much vivid and specific detail to paint a movie in our minds.
* Along with the who what when where why, try to engage our senses of sound (dialogue) sight (images),  touch, smell, and taste—if it is relevant to the experience. (It usually is!)
* Read each section carefully to be sure you are following the flow of the rubric. A narrative writing piece needs to have the natural flow of human speech to be effective. If it is too choppy, it will be an ineffective piece because it won't feel or sound real.
* Remember that no writing piece is ever “done.” It is abandoned. Before you abandon this piece, let it sit for a couple of days, then go back to it.
* When you are ready to abandon it, record it as a podcast or a short video essay and post it on your blog and as a single document in your Quip folder.

This rubric, if used wisely, is essentially a brief essay—and a damn good one if you give it the time and focus that well-crafted writing needs.

I will give you as much feedback as you need or want while you craft this.

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| STEPS OF THE RUBRIC | Column 2 |
| **1) DIRECTIONS:** | Create your text in the boxes below |
| **2) UNIVERSAL THEME:** Writing out your theme as a single word or phrase is a good way to help keep focused as you write the paragraph. Put your  them centered on the page above your paragraph. |  |
| **3) GUIDING QUOTE:** If you are only writing a single paragraph, it is a good idea to put a quote above the paragraph that captures the mood, tone, and theme of your paragraph. |  |
| **4) BROAD THEME**Write a short declarative statement, question, or philosophical speculation that touches on a broad theme that all of us can relate to in some way or other. This acts as a "hook" that will attract your reader's attention. Despite what you might wish, no one really cares about you when they read; a reader cares primarily about himself or herself. This broad theme is a theme that any person can relate to on some level, and hopefully it is intriguing enough to make your reader want to read on. |  |
| **5) NARROW THEME:** Narrow down your theme by writing a phrase or sentence using the theme word that captures how your chosen theme is used in a specific way in the experience you are going to write about. Make sure it is "clear, concise and memorable" because this is what you want your readers to remember "as" they read your paragraph. This is the sentence that "steers" your reader in the direction you want your paragraph to go, and in that sense, it is what your paragraph is going to be about. |  |
| **6) ONE/TWO PUNCH:** Follow your topic sentence with one or two more sentences that add detail or explanation to your topic sentence.These sentences can (and maybe should) be longer sentences. This helps to “narrow down” the focus of your paragraph so that you only have to write about what can be fully explained in one paragraph. |  |
| **7) SMOKING GUN:** When writing about how you think and feel about something, it is usually a good idea to wed those thoughts with some kind of actual experience.When writing about a personal experience, chose a specific personal experience (or even a smaller part of an experience) that explicates, illustrates, and amplifies the theme of your paragraph. This personal experience is proof that you have been there and done that, which is why we call it the smoking gun! It is evidence that you are the one who had the experience that only YOU can write about with full authority. When you write the smoking gun, be sure to include as much detail as needed—**the who? what? when? where? and why?**—to fully capture the theme of your paragraph. |  |
| **8) HEAD & HEART:** The head and heart should start with a narrow focus and end with a more broad focus--and that focus has to be on your theme you introduced in your first few sentences--and then supported in your smoking gun.In the head and heart you want to explore, explain, and explicate how your theme is important to the experience you described. This is where you *reflect* upon your experience and describe the ways that this experience has impacted and affected your life.**\***Write as many more sentences as you "need" (but at least three more) to illustrate and elaborate upon whatever you introduced in your theme-setting sentences. This is also the best place to expand the length of your paragraph—if needed! | Put your text here |
| **9) GET ON or GET OUT!** This is your concluding sentence that either wants to close out your thoughts or "transition" to a new paragraph.If is is a a single paragraph, be sure to include references to your one-word theme in a compelling, universal, and interesting way. | Put your text here |
| **10) EDIT, REVISE, & PROOFREAD**-Spend at least ten minutes editing and revising.-Be certain that every punctuation mark is supported by one of the rules.-Double check every word that is a possible homophone.**Be sure that every sentence is as clear, concise, and compelling as possible and is true to the intent of each step of this rubric.** |  |

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| Paste your completed paragraph in the box below. Read it through, recite it, and make any revisions you feel are needed to make this feel like your natural and thoughtful voice. Turn in this assignment as required. |
| Copy and paste each section here. Proofread carefully and edit and revise as needed. |
| **Metacognition:**Write a few sentences that reflect your thoughts on writing this paragraph: what was hard, what was rewarding, and what helped you create this paragraph--and anything else that is spinning through your head related to this assignment. |