

*Making a Modern Project Manager*¹

Be Kinder to Yourself²

Yasmina Khelifi

Continuous learning and improvements are critical skills for a modern leader. But sometimes, we are too hard on ourselves, and we focus on negative feedback. Learning to be kinder to yourself even if you make mistakes will help you listen to positive feedback and gain new perspectives.

You can make mistakes – so what?

When you make mistakes, please think of their impact on you, your team, and the project.

Acknowledge honestly that you made a mistake. You will help build a safe psychological culture and become a role model.

Investigate the root cause of the mistake.

- Was it caused by a lack of knowledge?
- Was it caused by inattention?
- Was it caused by a lack of information or by overlooking information?

Tailor corrective action based on the impact, urgency, and root cause of the mistake.

Document this for your team or yourself.

But don't beat yourself up for days about the mistake you made. It does not define you or detract from your qualities and strengths.

¹ Editor's note: This series of articles is for Gen X, Y and Z project professionals by a real project manager. The author Yasmina Khelifi is an actual project manager with a large multinational telecom in France while also an active PM professional, authoring articles, interviews and a popular LinkedIn blog as well as a podcast with a global audience. Active in PMI France for many years, she has been an international correspondent for the PMWJ since 2021. We are delighted that she agreed to author a series of articles based on her personal experiences over the last decade.

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Accept positive feedback

I was at a conference recently and two people began to tell me good things about myself. I didn't listen to them at all. I switched off my ears! I thought they wanted to please me. But in positive feedback, you can discover things you don't know about yourself or new strengths.

Don't interpret "It's great" as mere politeness. Sometimes it is, but sometimes not.

It's a good idea to keep in a folder or in a journal the positive feedback you receive. It might contradict some of your negative thoughts ("I'm not good at..."). By documenting positive feedback, you can create positive affirmations and boost your self-esteem.

Get new perspectives

Try not to judge yourself too quickly. Imagine you are talking to a friend: how would you describe yourself?

Give yourself the benefit of the doubt.

When you are entrenched in your work, you overlook the big picture. Talk with trusted colleagues and friends about your problems and how you feel about them. Sometimes, a problem may look huge, but talking to others will give you a new perspective. For example, you may finish giving a presentation and be unsatisfied with the result. This has often happened to me. But when friends have a look and give me their objective feedback, I try to shut down the negative voices in my head.

Respect your health

And, of course, the most important thing is your physical and mental health.

If you feel tired, don't conclude, "I'm not courageous. I must keep going away." Perhaps these are warning signs from your body, and you should consider them.

When people treat themselves with compassion, they are better able to arrive at realistic self-appraisals, which is the foundation for improvement. -Serena Chen in the September–October 2018 issue (pp.116–123) of Harvard Business Review.

What best practices can you share to be kinder to yourself?

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