

In the introduction to his book **“Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking”**, Daniel Dennett, the cognitive scientist and philosopher at Tufts University tells us that he is an *“experienced mistake-maker”*. He writes:

Many of the students who arrive at very competitive universities pride themselves in not making mistakes — after all, that’s how they’ve come so much farther than their classmates, or so they have been led to believe. I often find that that I have to encourage them to cultivate the habit of making mistakes, the best learning opportunities of all.

In **“Antigone”** (translated by Dudley Fitts), written probably around 440 BC, the Greek playwright Sophocles has Tiresias, a blind prophet, say:

....all men make mistakes,

But a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong,

And repairs the evil.

The only crime is pride.

Anita Feng, the Buddhist teacher and artist, agrees with Sophocles in her essay **“How to Make a Spectacular Mistake”**. She writes that *“Mistakes are inevitable”*, and points out that *“in order to live a meaningful life, we have to, first of all, resist buying into a narrative of failure. Instead, we pick up the pieces and transmute them into a fitting, beautiful change. In other words, it’s all about the repair.”*

Anita then goes on to illustrate the idea of *repairing mistakes* with *kintsugi* — the Japanese craft of pottery-repair.

The process basically consists of repairing broken pottery with lacquer that's dusted and burnished with powdered gold. Rather than trying to hide the flaws, the pieces of bowls or pots or plates are lovingly reassembled and the lines where they were broken become highlighted with gold, marking them as precious objects honored and even prized for their imperfections.

In kintsugi, the reality of brokenness represents an opportunity for the transformation of consciousness. What a wonderful metaphor for our lives....

Our responses to mistakes reveal who we are



Anita writes: “This kintsugi art of golden repair requires, first of all, a clear-eyed seeing of what is. All the fabricated stories about how impossible the situation is, or how our devastations might be assigned, categorized, or clung to — all are brushed away. A space is made clear for repair.”

When we are willing to learn, and make “*space for repair*”, we will start to see, what Kathryn Schulz, the Pulitzer winning author (“**Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error**”) means when she writes that “*however disorienting, difficult, or humbling our mistakes may be, it is ultimately wrongness, not rightness, that can teach us who we are.*”

Peace ☐

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