

THE RESOURCEFUL TEACHER Series

Verónica de Andrés • Jane Arnold

Seeds of confidence

Self-esteem activities for the EFL classroom



With CD-ROM / Audio CD



1.9

My mistake

Focus: Writing and listening.

Level: Intermediate +

Time: 40–50 minutes



Preparation: Make posters with the mistake quotations (below), printing one each on an A4 sheet of paper, of different colours if possible. Put them up around the classroom.

in class

1. At the beginning of the lesson, have students walk around the room to read the quotations and decide which one they like best.
2. In groups of 4 or 5, they share which quotations they chose and why. Encourage them to discuss anything of interest related to the quotations.
3. Tell the class a mistake story of yours (see example below).
4. Give students about 10 minutes to work individually and think of a time when they made a mistake and to write a short paragraph explaining what happened. Stress that they should feel comfortable telling others about it.
5. Reform groups: the group members tell each other their mistake stories. The group chooses the one they like best, and then they read it to the whole class.
6. Discuss with students the need to make mistakes in order to learn. While our goal is to speak the language we are learning fluently, for us to reach our goal we will have to use the language before we know it well, and it is normal to make mistakes.

Variation

For Step 5, collect the students' stories, and read each one out to the class. If you wish, you can make minor corrections as you read. Have the class try to guess who might have written the mistake story. After a moment, whether they guess correctly or not, say 'This is Gunter's (Alicia's ...) beautiful (or lovely, or ...) mistake.' Do this for each one, to reinforce the idea that it is all right to make mistakes.

Jane's mistake:

One day she went to class, and when she got there she noticed she had put on one black shoe and one brown one. But that isn't all. One shoe had a higher heel than the other one!

1.9 My mistake

<p>Mistakes are the portals of discovery.</p> <p>(James Joyce)</p>	<p>The only people, scientific or other, who never make mistakes are those who do nothing.</p> <p>(Thomas Henry Huxley)</p>
<p>Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes.</p> <p>(Mahatma Gandhi)</p>	<p>The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing.</p> <p>(John Powell.)</p>
<p>If I had my life to live over ... I'd dare to make more mistakes next time.</p> <p>(Nadine Stair)</p>	<p>A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.</p> <p>(George Bernard Shaw)</p>
<p>Mistakes, obviously, show us what needs improving. Without mistakes, how would we know what we had to work on?</p> <p>(Peter McWilliams)</p>	<p>The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one.</p> <p>(Elbert Hubbard)</p>
<p>Mistakes are a part of being human. Appreciate your mistakes for what they are: precious life lessons that can only be learned the hard way.</p> <p>(Al Franken)</p>	<p>A mistake is a gift to the class.</p> <p>(Caleb Gattegno)</p>

Note

For students to have a useful, positive attitude towards their errors, we need to have sensitive policies of error correction.

Acknowledgement

We learned about telling mistake stories from Tim Murphey's *Language Hungry! An Introduction to Language Learning, Fun and Self-Esteem*, 2006 (Helbling Languages).

2.4 Talking about me

Focus: Speaking. We reinforce our sense of identity when we remember positive things about ourselves, and even more when we talk about them to others. One comfortable way to do this is in the context of a game.

Level: Lower intermediate +

Time: 30–40 minutes

Preparation: Bring a copy of the board (below) and a dice for each group.

in class



- Put students randomly into groups of 3 or 4: have them sit in a circle in their group. Give each group a dice and a photocopy of the board. Then let them have a few minutes to read the things they may have to talk about and to get some ideas. At this time they can use dictionaries or ask you how to say anything they are not sure about.
- Each group member throws the dice and the student with the highest number begins the game. Each time, a student throws the dice, moves the number of squares shown on the dice, and then talks for 30 to 60 seconds about what is indicated on the square they have landed on. The first student to reach FINISH is the winner, but in this game everyone wins because they are all benefiting from the positive atmosphere established.

START →	One person who has helped me	One thing I would like to learn	One thing I can do well	How I am feeling today ↓
A nice experience I have had this week ↓	A goal I have	Something that makes me happy	Someone that I admire	A time I helped someone ←
A value that is important for me →	A friend	Something I am grateful for	An object in my home that is special for me	A place that is special for me ↓
A word I really like in English ↓	A pleasant memory	Something I learned this week	My favourite song	A time someone helped me ←
Someone in my family →	One thing I hope to do during the next year	A time I was surprised	A nice present I received	FINISH

2.4 Talking about me



A shorter version of the game can be played using a coin. With heads, students move one space, with tails, two.

START →	One person who has helped me	One thing I would like to learn	One thing I can do well	How I am feeling today ↓
A nice experience I have had this week ↓	A goal I have	Something that makes me happy	Someone that I admire	A time I helped someone ←
A value that is important for me →	A friend	A time someone helped me	Something I am grateful for	FINISH

Extension

After all groups have finished, and still in their circles, each student says to the whole class one thing that he or she has learned about a classmate during the game. So that everyone will be mentioned, you can specify that the students select something about the student on their left.

3.15

We perform

Focus: Developing a good group atmosphere, which contributes significantly to students' feeling of belonging.

Level: Lower intermediate +

Time: 20-25 minutes

Preparation: Select some sayings with a positive message, one for each four or five students (see **Inspiring Quotations**, Activity 4.4, for some suggestions) and print each saying on different coloured paper. Then cut each saying into several pieces, so you end up with one piece for each of your students; for example, if you have 25 students, cut up 5 sayings into 5 pieces.

in class

1. Mix up your sayings pieces and hand them out in a random manner, one to each student, as they come into the room for their lesson.
2. Students form a group with others who have the same coloured paper. (To make this easier, you might stick up a piece of each colour on the wall in different parts of the room, and they meet by their colour.) They put together their pieces of paper to see what their saying is.



3. You can then tell them something like this: *You all have wonderful sayings that you want to communicate to the rest of the class, so decide how you want to present your saying to them. Maybe you want to sing it, or make a rap, or each person in the group will repeat it in a different way. Maybe you want to mime it or act it out. Be creative!!*

4. After they have had time to decide on their presentation and to rehearse it, call on each group to present their saying. Encourage the class to clap after each presentation.



Note

Group processes are a fundamental factor in the classroom, and can contribute significantly to successful language learning. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003:50) point out that classroom groups go through stages of development: group formation, transition, performing, and dissolution.

Sometimes the performing stage is not emphasised in the classroom – and yet it can be one of the best ways to create a positive group climate; in this activity, we are always surprised at the interest and enthusiasm it generates.