

Speak Up Shortcuts

Most of the time the ruts you'll face are due to the natural ebbs and flows of motivation and life. But every once in a while, you may genuinely mess up. Here is how to make amends when you make a mistake.

- **Don't exaggerate.** With few exceptions—like if you're a pilot or surgeon—work gaffes aren't life-and-death and can be resolved or corrected. Be kind to yourself and pull out the positive self-talk: *People make mistakes—I guess it was my turn. It's embarrassing, and I'll get through it.*
- **Own up to it.** Apologize if you need to, but don't overdo it. A swift *I made an error and I'm working on fixing it ASAP* is usually enough to save face and your reputation.
- **Patch relationships.** If the mistake affected other people, you may need to rebuild trust. A good rule of thumb is that it takes five positive interactions to outweigh one negative one.
- **Make adjustments.** Evaluate how and why the slipup happened and create a plan for what you can do to prevent it going forward. For example, one of my clients was mortified that she kept misspelling an important client's name and she was worried it would jeopardize the account. She typed out a list of her clients and stuck it to her cubicle for the reminder and easy reference.
- **Find a healthy distraction.** Give yourself permission to take your mind off the mistake. Diffuse dwelling by getting lost in a work project you enjoy or taking a cuddle break with your pet.