

# Opinion: Why people make mistakes

By Peter Demarest

None of us is immune to mistakes, and the one universal truth of making mistakes is that we all hate that moment when we realize that we just screwed up.

When it hits us that we've made a mistake, we always have that instant of "Wow, that was stupid, what was I thinking?" before we move on and try to solve the problem we've inadvertently caused.

I refer to the elimination of that space of time between when we screw up and the time we realize we've screwed up as practical enlightenment. For the past dozen years or so, I've been studying mind-brain science to see if there is a way to help us think better so we make fewer mistakes and create a better life.

I believe we can go further than just preventing mistakes. I believe through the science-based techniques I've discovered, people can dramatically improve how they think, make choices, act, and react without having to fix their so-called weaknesses. I derive these ideas from research in a science called neuro-axiology, which is a combination of brain science and value science. Axiology is the name of a fascinating science about how our value perceptions influence our thoughts, choices, actions, and reactions. It's also about how value actually gets created in the world and in our lives.

I invite people to start thinking better by asking themselves what I call the central question of life, love, and leadership. It's amazingly simple, but tremendously helpful.

Whenever you're feeling confused, upset, reactive, conflicted,

confronted, or frustrated, or at anytime that you simply want to be thinking the best you can, just ask yourself, 'What choice can I make and action can I take, in this moment, to create the greatest net value?'

My entire coaching process is based on the natural functions of the brain that allows people to make better use of the strengths and wisdom they already have to get better and better at answering "the central question".

Fundamentally, success in life is not about the value we get, it's about the value we create. When people make the deliberate effort to think it terms of "the central question", they naturally make fewer mistakes, make better decisions, and create greater value in life and work.

You see, most of us, most of the time, act out of habit. We allow ourselves to be controlled by our emotions and our 'mental programming. We basically let our weakness and our self-centric perceptions of the world run the show. Case in point, do we really need to let our upset over the guy who cut us off on the way to work in the morning ruin our whole day and keep us from being as happy and productive as we could be? We get angry out of habit, but if we consciously shift our perspective from our self-centric upsets and concerns to what we value and the value we can create—then we can literally change our lives.

"The central question" quickly helps us gain more confidence, satisfaction, joy and fulfillment. We get better in our work and in our relationships. We argue less and empower others more.

Using this one idea has made a bigger difference in people's lives and organizations than anything I've ever seen. We all want to make a good living and live the good life, but there is so much more to life than money, power and status which are fleeting and easily taken away. When you focus on the question

of what creates greater net value, you'll develop more of that practical enlightenment. You'll have a greater sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. Not only will you be professionally more successful, but you'll have greater personal success as well—and so will many of the people around you.

*Peter Demarest is the co-author of the book "Answering The Central Question". He is also is a co-founder and president of Axiogenics.*