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Embracing leadership mistakes to drive cultural transformation

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Close your eyes and picture yourself actively participating in this real-life experience. (You will find yourself in complete amazement.) As a business leader in your organization, you arrive on a Thursday afternoon for your administrative leadership monthly huddle. Your CEO begins each meeting with a personal greeting and a sincere welcoming message. What comes next could have you gasping for oxygen and planning your immediate exit from the boardroom, but this healthcare organization's leadership and compliance culture is different. Here the CEO supports open discussion of leadership mistakes across the organization, leading by example. The leadership monthly huddle begins by having each leader share with the leadership group one recent mistake, mishap, and/or screwup within the previous month. The leader shares the details of the mistake, key takeaways and learnings, what he/she will do differently next time, and any process or system needing to be implemented to ensure success. The purpose is for leadership development, continuous learning, and colleague support. You have probably guessed this by now. Who do you feel is the first leader to share one of his/her mistakes? You are correct — the CEO.

The chief executive officer shared:

As the CEO, I have a number of interactions with leadership, staff, providers, and patients through rounding on a daily basis. As I was rounding in one area of our organization, I had a less than ideal interaction with one of our staff, which led me to overact with that staff person's supervisors. Upon self-reflection, I made the realization, scheduled time with the supervisors, and made a sincere apology. My behavior and efforts had solid intention, but my presentation failed.

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