Being Wrong

Recognizing we are wrong publicly can be embarrassing. However, we need to see mistakes in a positive way because the best-kept secret is that everybody is wrong most of the time. The ability to be wrong is not something that is distinguished by age, gender, or social class. We all make mistakes. In the book, ‘Being Wrong,’ Kathryn Schulz, claims that being wrong is a “tribute to human creativity”; being wrong “creates and revises our beliefs and the world” (Schulz pg, 85). Accepting we can be wrong in certain occasions should not be seen as a means of embarrassment because it will prevent us from becoming open-minded and fostering personal growth, accepting mistakes is an opportunity to learn something new.

Schulz argues that admitting mistakes can contribute to the development of personal growth. Schulz says, “Far from being a sign of intellectual inferiority, the capacity to be wrong is crucial to the human cognition” (Schulz pg, 87). Sadly, the majority of people are afraid of recognizing their mistakes in order to avoid embarrassment and criticism. However, once we recognize our mistakes; they can open the door to a world filled with unknown experiences that ultimately can lead us to fulfilling personal growth. After all, being wrong isn’t bad whatsoever. Similarly, Schulz says that all wrongness is optimism: “We get things wrong because we have an enduring confidence in our minds; and we face up to that wrongness in the faith that, having learned something, we will get it right the next time” (Schulz pg, 338). For example, if we make a mathematics mistake, we first have to analyze it and then find the correct answer; by doing this; we will be less likely to make the
same mistake in the future. Not only does this initiative behavior show the positive effects of being open-minded in accepting mistakes, but also in seeking to solve them. The purpose is to decreases the likelihood of making the same mistakes afterwards.

In order to learn from mistakes in a productive fashion we need to recognize the benefits of being an open-minded thinker, but most importantly we need to recognize that we can’t be right all the time. Similarly, Schulz says that we love to know things, but ultimately we cannot know for sure that we know them; therefore, being open-minded thinker is decisive (Schulz pg, 70). Once mistakes are made, they cannot be reversed because we cannot get time back.

In one story, Schulz relates the story of a woman who was raped and ended up blaming the wrong man of sexual assault. A man at the beach assaulted Penny Beerntsen, a mother. Undoubtedly, Beerntsen accused Steve Avery, a 23-year old man with severe learning disabilities. Beerntsen, testified she fought with her attacker until the last minute before losing consciousness; her hands were covered with the attacker’s blood. Beerntsen woke up at the emergency room; two individuals had taken her to the hospital. Beerntsen declared she had seen her attacker’s face and later identified Avery as the attacker. He was found guilty and sentenced to thirty years in prison. The court and Beerntsen did not think about the possibility that the attacker could be another man. Avery’s family struggled with the criminal justice system multiple times to attain his release. In 2003, the Wisconsin Innocence Project attorneys took Avery’s case. The attorneys tested the blood found on Beerntsen’s hands on the day of her assault. That sample of blood was the only
evidence. In fact, the DNA results proved Avery was not the attacker. The blood sample belonged to another man. DNA is the latest form of evidence in forensic medicine. Accusing Avery, a mentally disabled man was Beerntseen’s her biggest life mistake whom later wrote a brief letter of apology to Avery. Beerntseen’s story teaches us how important is to have more than one possible solution to solve a problem. Beerntseen did not think of the possibility that her attacker could be another man. In fact, a mistake of this degree shows how beneficial is to being an open-minded thinker. Being humble in recognizing mistakes helps us to strengthen both our character and decision making. It is important to acknowledge that Beerntseen’s mistake cannot be forgotten by writing an apology letter because certain mistakes as hers cannot be taken superficially. In fact, they are not only mistakes, but they are life lessons.

Seeing mistakes as lessons is certainly the best thing we can do in order to learn from them. Similarly, the American politician Robert Green believes that, “Mistakes are a great educator when one is honest enough to recognize them, such as lessons.” Schulz tells us the story of C.P. Ellis, a poor, uneducated man whose childhood was a traumatic; as an adult he joined the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and became the leader of a KKK chapter. This title gave Ellis confidence for the very first time. The KKK persuaded Ellis to believe that his troubles were caused by African Americans. Schulz says, “If we often form our beliefs on the basis of our communities, we also form our communities on the basis of our beliefs” (Schulz pg,
Since then, Ellis developed prejudiced beliefs about African Americans. In the meantime, workshops on desegregation were been organized to persuade white people to collaborate to stop school segregation. Every community leader was expected to attend. So, Ellis did. There, Ellis met an African American woman named, Ann Atwater and Ellis became aware that African American poor people were facing the same educational struggles as white poor people. Contemplating these social similitudes, Ellis realized that segregation must be stopped. Therefore, Ellis decided to support the desegregation efforts. After meeting Atwater, Ellis realized the importance of being an open-minded thinker especially toward other ethnic groups. According to William James, beliefs “are really rules for action” (Schulz pg, 94). In fact, Ellis’ story shows the negative consequences of being closed-minded thinker, which makes us lose perspective.

Being closed-minded prevents us from becoming fair-minded thinkers. In fact, closed-minded people tend to live in their own constructed world. To avoid this we need to be open-minded; in order to comprehend social issues and question them accurately. Schulz tells the story of Albert Speer, a famous architect who was the minister of armaments and war production during the Third Reich. After the Holocaust, Nazi officials were put on trial accused of genocide. Speer’s testified to not being aware of the atrocities the Jews were subjected to. Speer did not ask anyone or do any investigation; Speer simply did not know anything. Speer was accused of war crimes and was sentenced to twenty years in prison. In spite of his incarceration, Speer wrote books, showing remorse for his blindness. Speer is an example of a closed-minded person who lives in their own constructed world.
ignoring everything that is happening around them. To avoid doing this, Schulz says, “We must query and speak and investigate and open our eyes.” Speer’s story tells us the importance of being open-minded to our present world, not only to socialize, but also in order to be informed about current issues. Being closed-minded can drag us into a deep hole of remorse, but by being open-minded individuals can avoid making mistakes they will regret later on in life. Mistakes definitely can change the way we see the outside world. Doesn’t matter how small a mistake might be, we always have to take full responsibility of our mistakes.

People in all walks of life make mistakes and being responsible for them can be hard especially for doctors, who are socially expected to make no mistakes and expected to take care of the ill. Additionally, Schulz narrates the story of Rafaela who underwent a botched surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. When Rafaela woke up in the recovery room asked why the wrong side of her body was in bandages. This question was shocking to the surgeon, who assumed he had performed a perfect surgery. Philip Tetlock, a psychology professor, says that “It is hard to ask someone why (he/she) got it wrong when they think they got it right” (Schulz pg, 185). Perhaps the simple answer to this question is that we all make mistakes. Schulz says that some mistakes are really bad, and this story is an example of a terrible mistake. In fact, wrongness does not distinguish between profession. We all can be wrong.

Accepting that we are wrong can be painful experience, but our mistakes do not define us. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that we cannot be right all the time because perfection only exists in our mind. It is not realistic, but is an
superficial and arrogant habit. We need to embrace our mistakes in the most productive way because they are just problems that can be faced, dealt with, and learned from. After all, mistakes keeps us humble and resilient. In other words, accepting our mistakes is an opportunity to improve because being wrong isn't bad whatsoever.

Works Cited

Critical Information Sheet Intent Statement:

We should not be embarrassed to recognize we can be wrong. Recognizing we have been wrong should be seen as an opportunity of learning something new because being wrong increases our ability to be open-minded due to mistakes helps us to growth as human beings. The purpose of the paper is to educate closed-minded individuals the benefits of being a growth mindset thinker. I want the audience to become more critical in their decision making and to stretch their potential.

Audience Description:

My audience is closed-minded individuals that have a tendency to believe are being right on nearly everything and have difficulties admitting they are wrong. They are mostly individuals that come from middle class, whom are accustomed to being praised for their talents and not accustomed to recognize their mistakes publicly. My audience is mostly composed of adults due to their already established character. Strategy Explanation:

I deliberately chose the most relevant real life examples provided by Schulz in her book to support my argument. I started of mostly with real life experiences, followed by how the experiences provided has strong correlation with my chosen topic. I also incorporated a significant number of pathos to explain how being closed-minded affected our decision-making ability in daily interactions. I carefully developed the counterarguments the opposite audience would respond to. For this reason, I decided to use passive voice as well as to talk directly to the audience to
cultivate a worth-trusting connection with them and to get their sympathy in my topic.

**Writer's Reflection:**

I deliberately chose this topic because I feel very passionate about the fixed mindset and growth mindset. In fact, I realized this topic is very important to me since I consider myself being a growth mindset thinker. However, I struggled a little in the organization of the paper and to choose examples.