Barriers and Needs for Sharing and Owning Our Failures

Recognition

Defensiveness and cognitive dissonance are common instinctive and neurobiological responses to failure, which make it hard to recognize a failure as a failure while we are in it.[1]

If we recognize our responsibility for the failure then…

Decision

Certain internal and external factors are required to overcome our instinctive fears and decide to share our failure story publicly.

External	Internal
Time to reflect and share	**Personal incentives** to share
Trust in the people with whom we share	Belief that sharing will lead to **change**
Ability to manage the **consequences** of sharing	**Self-confidence** to take ownership of the failure

If we decide to share our failure then…

Execution

We require certain skills to take ownership for and communicate our failures well. Such skills include communicating our story in a way that maximizes learning and avoids blame, using the theory and archetypes for thinking through our failures and framing them into a meaningful narrative, and the ability to analyze and learn *through* our failures - while they're happening and adjustments can still be made - not just *from* them.

All of the above is influenced by the type of failure in question. That is to say, sharing and owning a failure caused by incompetence with high consequences to oneself and others is a very different experience from sharing and owning one caused by experimentation with low consequences.

[1] Tavris, Carol & Elliot Aronson (2008). Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts

fail forward