

The Value of Making Mistakes

Pete sat at his desk, focused on his sketching. *This may be my best work yet. I can't wait to show Sam. He'll be so impressed.*

"Are you drawing something?" asked Amy, his five-year-old sister.

"Yes," said Pete, as he straightened, and with feigned indifference held up his piece of art.

"Oh," gasped Amy. "It's beautiful!"

"You think so?" asked Pete, flattered.

"Yes," said Amy. "It's the most beautiful doggie in the whole world!"

"WHAT!?" Pete nearly shouted. "It's a horse ... a horse, not a dog!"

"Well," said Amy, still smiling and oblivious to Pete's displeasure, "it's the most beautiful doggie-horse in the whole, wide world." And with that she skipped out of the room.

Pete looked at his sketch again and covered his face with his hands. *Thinking about it now, it does look like a dog!* He crumpled the sketch he had poured so much time into and threw it into the trash.

At school the next day he was still feeling out of sorts, and got into an argument with Jerry during gym class over something neither of them could remember afterwards.

That evening, Sam, Pete's older brother, who was eighteen and seemed to be good at everything, asked Pete if he wanted to do some sketching that evening.

"No," mumbled Pete, "I don't think I want to draw anymore."

"Okay, then, what would you like to do?"



"I don't know. I'm just not good enough at anything. I tried to learn how to play guitar last month, but it sounded horrible. Last time we played soccer, I missed a perfect shot at the goal and somebody laughed, so I'm not any good at that either. And yesterday, I was drawing a ... a horse, and Amy thought it was a dog. I'm not good at anything."

“Sorry you feel that way,” Sam said.

“I feel that way too, sometimes.”

“You? No way! You sketch well, and play sports. You’re a good guitarist, and you’re good at so many other things!”

Sam smiled. “There are still plenty of things that I’m not good at. And even the things I can do well now, it took me time before I achieved competence in them. I wasn’t always good at them.”

Pete thought for a moment.

Somehow, he had always pictured his older brother as someone who could do everything perfectly.

“For example,” said Sam, “I’m learning to drive, and yesterday, just when I thought I was getting the hang of it, I nearly crashed into a light pole. I forgot for a moment which pedal was the gas and which was the brake. I didn’t crash, though, because the instructor used his brake. Later I couldn’t help but laugh about my mistake.”

“You laughed?” Pete asked, wondering how on earth someone could laugh at something so embarrassing.

“Well, yes. You see, I’d just been boasting to the driving instructor about what a fast learner I was. Then I nearly hit a light pole. In retrospect, it was pretty funny.”



Pete’s expression was puzzled, and Sam patted him on his shoulder. “Making mistakes wasn’t very funny for me either, when I was eleven. But then Dad would tell me this story and I would feel better.”

Pete loved Sam’s stories; they were funny and cool. “Tell me the story,” he urged.

“Okay, here goes,” said Sam, and his eyebrows drew together as he focused on remembering the details.

“Once upon a time, there was a boy called Sir Pete Perfection. ...”

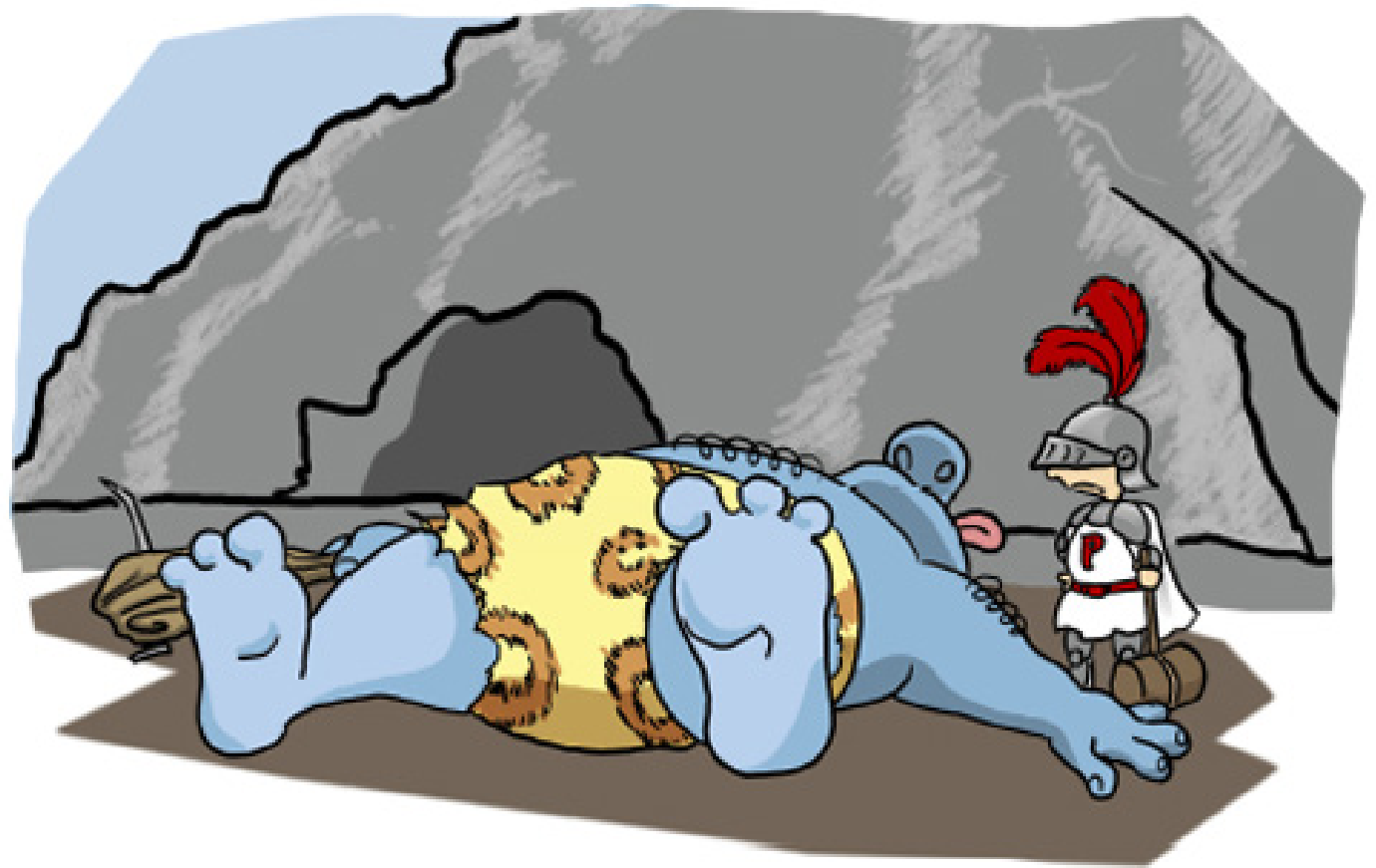
“Hey, wait a second!” interrupted Pete. “Is this a story about me?”

“No, but you have to put the name of the person you’re telling the story to inside the story or it won’t work. When Dad told it to me the hero was called Sam Supreme. Do you want me to finish the story?”

“Go on.”

“Right. So, once upon a time, there was a boy who was called Sir Pete Perfection who was amazingly good at everything. He lived in the time of knights and chivalry, and he made it his quest to kill off the many dragons that plagued the land. He soon was known throughout the land as the doer of mighty and noble deeds. When he was but a wee baby of five months old, he could walk already, and so he put on his armor, mounted his trusty stallion, and killed all the dragons in the land without getting so much as a single scratch.

“Next he rescued all the damsels in distress, killed all 265 ogres that were then living in the caves of the mountains, defeated all his lord’s enemies in single combat, dethroned the reigning chess



world champion, and ended his sparkling career rather suddenly by dying of boredom at the young age of seven years old. The end.”

“Aww ... what kind of story is that?” complained Pete. Then, seeing Sam’s wide grin, he added suspiciously, “There’s some sort of moral in this story, isn’t there?”

“Well, I’ll let you figure it out for yourself,” said Sam.

“I didn’t really like it. It was too short. Nothing much happened.” Pete was disappointed.

“Yes, well, I didn’t care for it when I first heard it either,” added Sam.

“It’s unrealistic, too,” continued Pete. “A five-month-old baby can’t walk and ride horses, much less slay dragons.”

“True,” said Sam, and left it at that.



That night Pete dreamt of the story Sam had told him. In his dream he was Sir Pete Perfection, riding a stallion and defeating dragons, rescuing damsels, fighting wars, and then suddenly dying of boredom.

The next day, when he awoke, he thought about a five-month-old baby who could ride a horse and kill dragons. It was all quite funny. Later that day, he tried sketching a horse again.

He called out, “Amy, could you come over here? I want to ask you something.” He showed his sister the picture with bated breath.

She looked at it and gasped, “It’s so cool! I really like it.”

“But,” said Pete, “what is it?”

“Easy,” said his sister. “It’s a horse—wearing bunny ears.”

Pete’s lower lip trembled and he looked at his picture again. Then, he laughed so hard he couldn’t even pause to explain to Amy why what she had said was so funny. Why should he let bunny ears get him down? In time he’d perfect his artwork.

When he finally calmed down, he carefully placed the picture in his portfolio. *So I won’t forget, he thought. I’ll remember the story too ... and one day, I’ll tell it to someone else.*

The End



Think of it this way: Perseverance equals success.
Perseverance equals lasting skills. Persevere!