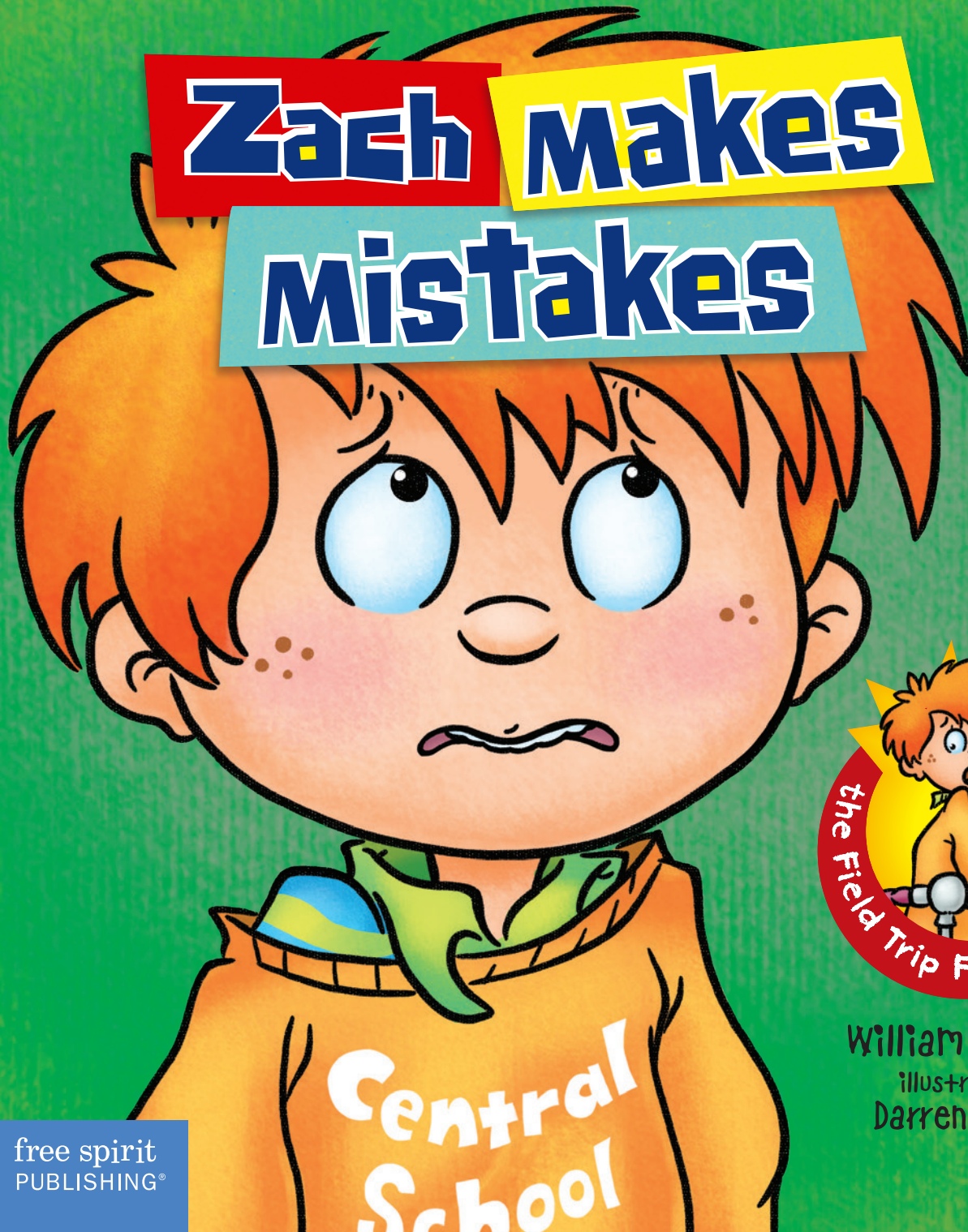


# Zach Makes Mistakes



William Mulcahy  
illustrated by  
Darren McKee

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free spirit  
PUBLISHING®



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## Dedication

To Melissa, for showing me, and embracing with me, the music and the dance to its fullest. It's truly never too late to become the person you want to be. I love you.

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And lastly, to my six children: Liam, Luke, Kegen, Jack, Makenna, and Masen, for your energy, playfulness, and ongoing curiosity about everything Zach.



**Oh, no!** He had forgotten to wear his orange school shirt. Students were supposed to wear them on field trips.

He asked his teacher, Ms. Rosamond, if he could call his mom. His teacher let him use her cell phone. But Zach's mom was already at work. "Sorry," Mom said. "I can't bring your T-shirt to school."



"Does that mean I have to stay at school while you guys go on the field trip?" Zach asked Ms. Rosamond. "No," Ms. Rosamond said. "I have an extra shirt—it's a little big, but it's better than nothing."

Zach's best friend, Sonya, tried to cheer him up. "Everyone makes mistakes," she said.

"Easy for you to say," Zach said. "You're not wearing a big ugly tent to the field trip."

Sonya told Zach about the time she made a huge mistake by dressing up for her friend's birthday party in a Halloween costume instead of her dress-up clothes. "I thought **dress up** meant wearing a costume."



Zach laughed thinking about Sonya wearing a costume at a fancy party. By the time they got to the museum, he felt a little better.

# Helping Children Learn from Mistakes

Mistakes can be embarrassing, frustrating—even infuriating. Some mistakes can ruin your whole day. This is as true for grown-ups as it is for kids. But while most adults have the skills and experience to handle mistakes in an emotionally healthy way, young children typically need our help learning to overcome their mistakes and grow from them.

Because mistakes can feel so uncomfortable, many children fear making them and try to be perfect. Other kids may appear to have a casual attitude toward mistakes, repeating the same ones over and over and not seeming to learn anything from them. Most kids fall somewhere in between—they simply do their best to get over their mistakes and move on. In any case, children’s success at learning from mistakes depends on their ability to handle the emotional fallout that comes with making them. That’s where the Key to Mistakes comes in. It’s a tool that puts kids in charge of their emotions and behavior, providing a skill that gives them a foundation for a lifetime of learning and growth.

The Key to Mistakes is a three-part process that helps kids develop the awareness to recognize their mistakes and the control to handle the gritty emotions that often accompany them. This proactive approach to mistakes enables lessons to emerge, creating a positive outcome from something that at first feels only negative.

The Key to Mistakes is most successful when children and adults are partners in learning and practicing the steps. As you work together with kids, always keep in mind two things: nobody’s perfect and everybody makes mistakes. These phrases may seem cliché, but they’re true, and they’re truly important! Approach children who have made mistakes with compassion, empathy, and an eye on learning from this situation. When you model this attitude, you show children how to treat themselves that way, too.



The Key to Mistakes has the power to:

- Teach valuable life lessons and consequences
- Teach us about our strengths and weaknesses
- Teach us how to forgive ourselves
- Decrease fear and anxiety about making mistakes
- Help us learn, grow, and evolve
- Help us understand we are not perfect—and that’s okay
- Help us take responsibility and feel empowered

Here is more information about the three parts of the Key to Mistakes and some tips to help guide your child:

- 1. Detect.** In this step, children are asked to admit their mistake and discover why they made it. Help them figure out whether their mistake came from not understanding something, not paying attention, or not being careful. Don’t underestimate the power of this first step. The awareness that comes from admitting a mistake and discovering the reason behind it puts children in a stronger position to cope with their current and future emotions and behaviors. By honestly detecting their mistake, children are learning to pay closer attention, practice deeper understanding, and be more careful.
- 2. Correct.** In this step, children look for ways to fix their mistake or make things better. Some mistakes are easier to fix than others. If a child forgets to pick up her toys, she can fix things by picking them up right away. Other mistakes may require more effort. If someone has been hurt or offended, an apology is probably appropriate. Some mistakes need help from an adult to fix. Encourage and coach children to find solutions on their own, but don’t hesitate to assist if needed. However kids can fix their mistake, they benefit greatly both cognitively and emotionally from the experience. Even if a mistake cannot be fixed, the act of *trying* to fix it is valuable.
- 3. Reflect.** In this step, children are given time to think back over their mistakes, learn from them, and make peace with themselves if they need to. At first, kids may need

