

# The Fallible Factor and What to Do About It

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Being fallible doesn't mean one is inevitably stupid, lazy, greedy or weak, there are as many advantages to being human and fallible as there are limitations. No one should want humans to be robotic – this would make us non-human. No one should want to control others – independence, choice and freedom are essential to being human. The idea that emotions, unconscious, spirit, soul, entropy, non-rational and non-material aspects of the human condition are somehow 'wrong' would take from humans the very things that make living living. The idea that sterile, non-messy, non-problematic, non-complex environments are somehow 'better' than

environments with uncertainty and less control – takes from humans all opportunity to learn, develop and become resilient. The idea that life is somehow better with more regulation and that the solution to every limitation by fallibility is more legislation is an absurd positional denial of humanness. Humans in their quest for freedom, creativity and innovation (the quest to be human) simply seek more alternatives, trade-offs and bypasses to the absurdity that seeks to deny fallibility. Why do some talk as if humans are irrational 'slaves' to our emotions, as if emotions are wrong?

When humans develop heuristics, habits and biases to live with the complexities of life so they can do things in automatic, why does the trade of safety interpret these as problematic? Why is it that so much of what we see in the ideology of orthodox safety is the denial of humanness and fallibility? Why is it that the trade of safety doesn't know how to live with fallibility? Why is the trade of safety is so fearful and anxious about being human that it adopts a discourse of non-human language and talk in absolutes as if this is good? Why is it that the trade of safety has to protect, 'tell' and control everyone, when they know they can't?

I have a friend who loves to engage in risky activities, and every time he's found in the 'high' of the activity his favourite saying is; 'This is Living'. If you want to see someone



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who knows 'This is Living' then check out my friend James Kell  
<http://www.jameskell.com>.

In a recent Standards Australia Media Release for Playgrounds we see demonstrated the absurdity of the risk aversion mindset to control and manufacture fun. <http://www.standards.org.au/AnalyticsReports/140416%20Playground%20Standards%20AS%204685%20MR%20final.pdf>. It has finally dawned upon the regulatory mindset that kids are not getting outside and that the quest for risk aversion has ruined any attraction of kids to take risk outside. A lack of insight a few years ago by the regulation mindset (the inability to see trajectory) didn't see the tradeoff for fear of harm simply created a new and insidious form of harm, obesity. Then what do we see in response, a standard to manufacture and create fun? OMG, even in seeking solutions the bloody regulatory mindset doesn't get it. The idea that one can orchestrate and manufacture fun misses the point. My grandkids have more fun down at the creek and playing with pots and pans than the sterile monuments to fear regulators have erected.

The nonsense trajectory of the absolutist zero mindset doesn't understand that risk doesn't disappear, it simply goes somewhere else less visible. If we can't see psychological or social harm, then it has gone away. Those who delight in the delusion that harm has gone away are blind to the new harm they have created. We see the same this week with the growing dilemma of antibiotics. The delusion of control of harm has now shifted to a much more insidious predicament, even though the medical profession has believed in hormesis since its inception. <http://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/threat-report-2013/pdf/ar-threats-2013-508.pdf>. Soon, people will be dying of common illnesses that used to kill humans 80 years ago.

## **So what can the safety trade do about its preoccupation with the fear of fallibility?**

1. The first thing to do is to get rid of absolutist language from the safety discourse. Perfection talk has no place in any human activity. It is non motivational and drives dysfunctional mindsets.
2. Learn to live with and own fallibility as a good thing. This does not mean we have to accept harm as good, binary opposition thinking simply drives thinking back to a fundamentalist view of safety. The key to the entrapment of binary opposition is strategic silence and revealing the dissonance of black and white thinking.
3. Focus on what motivates humans beyond the nonsense idea that human action is simplistically defined by pleasure and pain.
4. Take the focus of the negative and counting of injury data as a demonstration of safety. Even if you achieve zero for a day, does this mean you are safe tomorrow?

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5. Shift from bureaucratic responses to risk with human approaches to managing risk. This means becoming more skilled in engaging and communicating WITH (not OVER) the people you work WITH.
6. Stop 'lording over others' and 'telling' others about safety, they aren't listening anyway, and neither are you.
7. Develop a better consciousness of human un-consciousness and the real things that drive human judgment and decision making.
8. Start to see that risk aversion makes people risk illiterate and focus much more on what makes people risk intelligent or what Gigerenzer calls in his latest book 'Risk Savvy'.
9. Prioritise language of 'learning', 'resilience' and 'imagination' in the risk space. Shift the talk in the trade of safety off 'objects, systems and things' back to subjects and people.
10. Appreciate the power of conversations and consultation, including the time and demand to reflect and create organizational sensemaking and collective mindfulness (Weick) at work.

**With not that many years to live and the reality of entropy (death), I'd rather have more years that I was able to say "This is Living" than, collected moments when I was made to apologize for being human.**

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