



ACC Bridge Chats – Personal Risk-Taking Professionals

(Optional) Link: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=jTszwmRffpw>
(Time: 5:48 mins)

Opening Activity

Each person will receive a sheet with nine dots on it. The goal is to draw four straight lines through all of the dots without moving the pencil from the paper. Participants can start drawing the lines from any position that they choose, but they must draw the lines one after the other without taking the pencil off of the page. Each line starts where the last line finished.

Excerpt from Denzel Washington's 'Fall Forward' Commencement Speech

Fail big. That's right. Fail big... Take chances, professionally. Don't be afraid to fail. There's an old IQ test with nine dots and you had to draw [four] lines with a pencil within these nine dots without lifting the pencil, and the only way to do it was to go outside the box. So don't be afraid to go outside the box. Don't be afraid to think outside the box. Don't be afraid to fail big, to dream big, but remember dreams without goals are just dreams and they ultimately fuel disappointment...I found that nothing in life is worthwhile, unless you take risks. Nothing. Nelson Mandela said there is no passion to be found playing small and settling for a life that's less than the one you're capable of living. I'm sure in your experiences...people have told you to have something to fall back on...but I've never understood that concept. If I'm going to fall, I don't want to fall back on anything... I want to fall forward; I figure at least this way I will see what I'm going to hit...Reggie Jackson struck out 2,600 times in his career, the most in the history of baseball, but you don't hear about the strike outs. People remember the home runs. Fall forward. Thomas Edison conducted 1,000 failed experiments because the 1,001st was the lightbulb. Fall forward. Every failed experiment is one step closer to success. You've got to take risks, and I'm sure you've probably heard that before, but I want to talk to you about why that's important. I've got three reasons...first, you will fail at some point in your life...embrace it because it's inevitable...second point...if you don't fail...you're not even trying. My wife told me this great expression: "To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did."...[and the third point is to] not only take risks, but to be open to life, to accept new views and to be open to new opinions...while it may be frightening, it will also be rewarding...So...this is your mission...never be discouraged, never hold back and give everything you've got—fall forward.

Discussion Questions:

- (1) How do you perceive personal risk? Personal failure? Is failure something that you can bounce back from?
- (2) What is the hardest part of taking a personal risk?
- (3) Share a real life example of someone who took a personal risk and decided to fall forward? How did that person's experience influence you when you were faced with a decisions to take a personal risk or not?
- (4) Discuss a time when you decided that you weren't going to take a personal risk in your personal or professional life. Do you have any regrets about it? What would you do differently, knowing what you know now?
- (5) What can you do to encourage those around you to accept personal risk to bring the future faster?

Rules of Engagement: (1) **Keep discussions professional and on topic.** (2) **Remember we're all on the same team.** The goal of the conversation isn't for one person to be proven right or to "win" the argument. We're here to have conversations and learn from one another. (3) **Avoid making it personal.** Avoid name-calling, personal attacks, or questions like "How could you believe that?" Assume that everyone's intentions are good. (4) **Practice intellectual humility.** Respect everyone's viewpoints, and be open to changing your mind when necessary. (5) **Above all else... Demonstrate respect for human dignity!**

Nine Dots Puzzle

Below are nine dots arranged in a set of three rows. Your challenge is to draw four straight lines which go through all of the dots without taking the pencil off the paper. Start from any position and draw the lines one after the other without taking your pencil off the page. Each line starts where the last line finishes.

