

# The Cost of Stupidity



Robert Anton Wilson states that 'stupidity has killed more people than all known diseases known to medicine or psychiatry'. Food for thought. When are we going to start to get smarter?-and I don't mean academically or technologically. We all know that a scalpel can be used to save a life or to end it. The difference is in the intention **and intelligence** of the hand that is holding it. It would appear that the hands holding a lot of the 'scalpels' in our society do not have sufficient intelligence to use the power they have for the betterment of **everyone**.

Lately we have experienced the effects of trusting those hands to run our economy – that hasn't worked out too well. In all of the televised debates and interviews that I have seen I have hardly ever heard the term 'greed' mentioned. In fact everyone ran for cover and no one has taken responsibility for their actions. In a litigious society it is dangerous to admit fault or complacency. A law suite might not be far behind. So the game of 'pass the parcel' goes on. The '[Tao Te Ching](#)' states:

*Failure is an opportunity.*

*If you blame someone else,*

*there is no end to the blame.*

*Therefore the Master*

*fulfils her own obligations*

*and corrects her own mistakes.*

*She does what she needs to do*

*and demands nothing of others.*

Sage advice and I wonder when all the blaming has settled down will the mistakes really get corrected by those who made them. One of the saddest things about this 'stupidity' is that the crisis has taken the focus away from a number of even more pressing issues, such as environmental sustainability and global economic inequality. Another way to look at the 'meltdown' is as '[creative destruction](#)' ( a term coined by the economists Joseph Schumpeter). Schumpeter went on to explain that at such points in society's evolution, innovation and creativity get released.

Apart from the release of creativity and innovation let's hope that we can become collaboratively smarter and realize that our challenge is not economic – the question we should be posing is 'How can we get collectively smarter?'

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## **Failure and Collaborative Intelligence**

"Being frightened of being wrong" is how [Ken Robinson](#) describes one of our most challenging hang-overs from our 'education'. I remember well the class room pressure to be 'right' even to this day and I left school...umm.. a few years ago. Intuitively we know that being wrong is part of life and that, on reflection, failure is a lot more informative than

success. All great sports performers know that one of the chief benefits of practice is the opportunity to 'safely fail'.

The value of failing forwards has not been lost on scientists and explorers down through the centuries either. Just about every advance in science and art was integrally linked to 'failure'. The ink leached, the wrong number was used, a mistake was made reading the map. Then something new was discovered.



Teaching our kids the value of doubt, the power of uncertainty and the learning and [value of failure](#) will enable them to be more creative and less bound by the known. This openness in long run will also enable them to grow up and become adults that seek out collaboration rather than compete to see who can be the 'most right'.

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## Learning from the 'Waist Up'

I had the good fortune to meet with a couple of people who are passionate about creating change in the education system. They put me onto a TED talk given by Sir Ken Robinson.

This is a beautiful and funny presentation about something that is fundamental to our ability to develop collaborative intelligence. If you haven't watched it yet – sit back and switch the phone off for 20 minutes. Tip: You will have to watch most of it to discover what Ken means by 'learning from the waist up'.