Momentum Rebuild

Facilitator guide

Your job: change what the team scores — from “did we fail” to “how fast do we recover”. Draw the recovery curve, plot the team’s past recoveries so it sees it has bounced back before, set a faster target, and leave with one owned first action. You run this from a whiteboard with sticky notes — no kit — in 45–90 minutes with a team.

The one line you must hold: this is not therapy and not a look-back review. You are changing the score — measuring recovery speed, not processing feelings or re-arguing the failure. The moment it turns into “how bad it was”, pull it back to “how fast do we recover, and how do we make the curve steeper?” **Score the climb, not the fall.**

· WHEN DO I USE THIS?

Use this when

GOOD FIT

A team that has stalled after a visible, demoralising setback — a failed launch, a lost deal, a missed milestone — and is frozen, deflated or over-cautiously perfecting. The setback is behind them; the momentum is gone.

WRONG TOOL

A live incident still unfolding › Delivery Recovery Path. An honest look at why it went wrong › Story vs Reality Review. Building a reusable recovery procedure › Recovery Playbook.

The one test before you start: is the problem that the team can’t get moving again — not that it doesn’t know what to do? If they’re stalled and demoralised, this rebuilds momentum. If they need to diagnose the failure or make a plan, use a different tool first.

PART 1 BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

get ready

1 · WHAT IS MY JOB HERE?

Your job and the one idea

You run this to one outcome: the team stops scoring the failure and starts scoring the recovery — and leaves with a faster target and one first action. Brief the team in 2–3 minutes in your own words; don’t assume anyone read the app page.

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THE ONE IDEA

Every team gets knocked back — the difference is how fast it starts moving again. You can't train not-failing; you can train the curve, and it gets steeper every time you score it. Open the room with it: "Every team gets knocked back. The difference is how quickly we start moving again. Today we're going to measure that instead of the setback." Your job is to change the scoreboard and exit through motion. Watch for the one failure mode: the session drifting into venting or a post-mortem — keep pulling it back to the recovery.

2 · WHAT DO I NEED?

What you'll need

What	Why it's there
One recent setback	A real, demoralising event the team has stalled after — and recognises as the thing that stopped it.
A whiteboard or flip chart	To draw the recovery curve: a time axis, the drop after the setback, and the climb back to normal.
Sticky notes and a marker	One sticky per past setback — its time-to-first-action and time-to-stable — placed on the curve. Plus a sticky for the target and the first action.

Alignment · Morale Recovery · 45–90 minutes · a team, one facilitator. The time is indicative and will depend on the setback and the size of the team.

Define "first action" before you start — you'll be asked. First action = the first piece of real execution that moved recovery forward, not talking about recovering. "We scheduled a meeting" doesn't count; "we shipped one fix" does. Hold that line when you mark the curves.

PART 2 DURING THE ACTIVITY

run it

Before you begin — 30-second check

- ✓ There's one real, recent setback the team has stalled after
- ✓ The team that took the setback is in the room
- ✓ The whiteboard, sticky notes and a marker are ready
- ✓ You're ready to hold the line against venting and drive to a first action

3 · HOW DO I RUN IT?

Run sheet

Brief the team (2–3 min), then run these in order. Every step is a physical action with a clear owner. Cap Step 1 hard; protect Step 5 (the first action) — a short plot with a committed first action beats a thorough curve with no movement.

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1. Name the setback	**4–5 min**	*Facilitator: ask "What's the setback that stopped us?"* Team: agree one recent setback and write it at the top of the whiteboard. One sentence, then move on. Cap it cleanly: "We'll name the setback in one sentence. Then we move to the curve — we're measuring recovery speed, not reliving the failure."
2. Draw the recovery curve	**8–10 min**	*Facilitator: draw a simple curve on the whiteboard — a drop after the setback, then the climb back to normal.* Say it plainly: "Today we're not measuring whether we failed. We're measuring how quickly we recover." This change of score is the whole mechanism.
3. Plot previous recoveries	**14–16 min**	*Team: think of two or three previous setbacks. For each, write its name on a sticky, estimate time-to-first-action and time-to-normal, and place it on the curve.* When all the stickies are up, look for the pattern together.
4. Plot today's setback	**10–12 min**	*Team: place today's setback on the curve. Then agree one target — how quickly do we take our first real action this time?* Write the target beside today's curve. Make it a faster curve, never "don't fail again".
5. Start the recovery	**10–12 min**	*Team: choose one action that begins the recovery. Write the action, the owner, and when it starts.* Drive to something concrete: "What's the smallest piece of real execution we can do this week? Not a meeting — a real action. Name it, own it, time it." Leave the room only once this is agreed.

The signals the insight is landing: the room stops talking about the setback and starts talking about the recovery; someone says "we got through the last one faster than this feels"; the team compares past recoveries. That shift — from "whether we failed" to "how fast we get back" — is the change of score taking.

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When to step in — and when to stay out · a principle, not a step

STEP IN

The room starts processing how bad it felt → pull back to recovery speed.

It drifts into "why did it happen" → that's a post-mortem; redirect.

The target becomes "don't fail again" → reset to a faster curve.

The plot is done but no first action → drive to one owned, timed move.

STAY OUT

The team is plotting and comparing curves → let it; the pattern is what matters.

Someone sits in defeat a moment → don't argue them out; point at the curve.

The curves haven't steepened → that's honest; use it to set the target.

The room goes quiet at the pattern → let it land.

The clearest tell it's time to step in: the plot is complete, the mood has lifted — and the team is drifting to wrap up without a first action. Step in: "Before we finish — what's the one move, who owns it, and when does it start?" No first action, no recovery.

PART 3 AFTER THE ACTIVITY

make it stick

4 · WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?

What participants say — and your move

What they say	Your response
"But it was a real failure."	"It was. Failure's done — we're scoring the recovery now, and that we can train."
"We should work out what went wrong."	"Worth doing — separately. Today we're rebuilding momentum, not diagnosing."
"We're just not going to recover from this."	"Look at the curve — we've recovered before, and faster than this feels. What's the first move?"
"This feels like forced positivity."	"It's not about feeling better — it's about measuring something we can change: how fast we get back."

5 · WHY DOES THIS WORK?

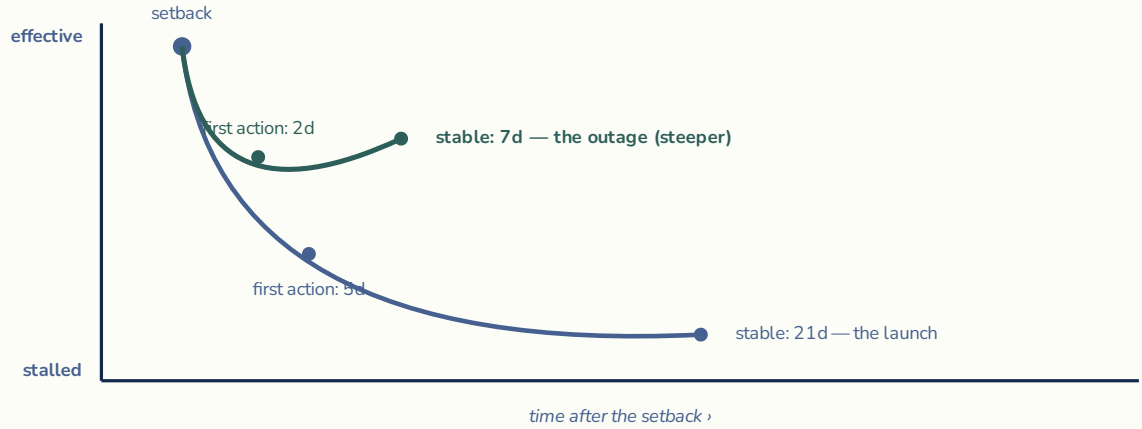
Why it works

This works by changing the measure, not the mood. Scoring recovery speed instead of success or failure changes how the team relates to failure — it becomes a trainable skill, not a judgement. The plotted past recoveries are evidence, not encouragement: a demoralised team forgets it has bounced back before, and the curves show it has. The first action rebuilds momentum through motion.

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THE RECOVERY CURVE — SCORE THE CLIMB, NOT THE FALL

plot real past recoveries and annotate them — the climb is the skill, and it gets steeper



Mark each curve: first action (the first real move) and stable (back to normal). Steeper = faster.

TWO PLOTTED RECOVERIES — THE PATTERN THE TEAM SEES

THE LAUNCH SLIP	THE OUTAGE
First action: **5 days** Back to normal: **3 weeks**	First action: **2 days** Back to normal: **1 week**

“We recovered faster the second time — this is something we’re good at.”

The proof isn’t encouragement — it’s the team’s own history, plotted where everyone can see it.

That plotted pattern is the moment the team realises: “we’ve done this before, and faster.”

Before you close the session

- ✓ The team understands the new scoreboard — recovery speed, not failure
- ✓ Past recoveries are plotted — evidence it has bounced back before
- ✓ A faster-recovery target is written: a specific time-to-first-action
- ✓ One first action is owned, with a start date agreed

6 · HOW DO I MAKE THIS STICK?

Take it back to work

THE HABIT

After any setback, ask: “how fast are we recovering — and how do we make the curve steeper than last time?”

Recovery is the trainable skill, not not-failing. Teams that run this once start reaching for “how fast can we recover?” the next time they’re knocked back — and beat their previous curve.

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Appendix · Reference

You should not need this while you run the activity. Read it before, or use it if a run goes sideways.

7 · A WORKED RUN

Watch the facilitator drive to the first action

The setback: “The flagship launch slipped and got pulled. The team’s flat — no one’s moving.”

Change the score: “We’re not scoring the launch — that’s done. We’re scoring how fast we get moving again.” Draw the curve. **Plot the past:** the last reorg took three weeks to get going; the outage before that, one week. For this team, the curves had been getting steeper.

WHAT LEAVES THE ROOM

DONE WELL

- Past recoveries plotted on the curve
- A faster-recovery target: “first move within 48 hours”
- One first action — owned and timed

the team is moving again

A HOLLOW RUN

- The room vents about how bad it was
- It becomes a post-mortem of why
- Feelings processed, no curve plotted
- No first action — nothing committed

the team leaves no less stuck

What the facilitator did: named the evidence — “you’ve recovered twice, and faster the second time; this is something you’re good at” — then drove straight to the move: “ship the smallest piece of the launch to ten users by Thursday. Owner: Priya.” The team walked in measuring the setback and walked out measuring the recovery — with one real move already committed. No pep talk; a different scoreboard.

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8 · WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

Common mistakes and edge cases

What happens	What to do
The session dwells on the setback	Cap Step 1 hard; shift to the curve. Naming the setback is one sentence, not the session.
It becomes "why did it happen"	That's a post-mortem — redirect to Story vs Reality Review, and come back to the climb.
It feels like forced positivity	Drop the cheerleading; anchor on the measurable — time-to-first-action.
No first action committed	The run failed regardless of mood. Require one owned, timed move before anyone leaves.
The team has no past recovery to plot	Use a smaller or individual example, or plot just the current setback and set the first action.
The setback is still unfolding	Wrong tool — steady the live incident with Delivery Recovery Path first, then rebuild momentum after.
"The setback wasn't our fault"	Agree, and use it: "correct — we're not scoring the setback or who caused it. We're scoring the recovery, and that part is ours."

9 · WHERE DOES THIS FIT?

Where this sits in the Gym

What the team needs	Use this
Momentum back after a demoralising setback (stalled, deflated)	**This tool — Momentum Rebuild.** Score the recovery curve, start the recovery.
To steady a setback that is still unfolding right now	**Delivery Recovery Path** — stabilise the live incident, find the next move.
To honestly understand why it went wrong	**Story vs Reality Review** — the told story vs the real drivers.
A reusable recovery the team can re-run next time	**Recovery Playbook** — build the procedure, not just the momentum.

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