



Project
Management
Institute.
New Jersey

The Power of Regret

How Looking Backward Moves Us Forward

By Daniel H. Pink

The Power of Regret: How Looking Backward Moves Us Forward

- ▶ In his most recent New York Times bestseller, *The Power of Regret*, Daniel Pink makes the case for how important and life-changing our regrets are in our lives.
- ▶ In contrast to the common idea that one lives fully with “no regrets”, Pink shows us the many ways in which regret truly adds value and depth to our lives.
- ▶ Using the largest sampling of American attitudes about regret ever conducted as well as his own World Regret Survey, which has collected regrets from over 16,000 people in 105 countries, he identifies the four core regrets that most people have.
- ▶ By identifying what we regret most we can understand what we value the most, thus enabling us to transform regrets into a positive force for working smarter and living better.

Dispelling Common Beliefs

- ▶ The life-thwarting nonsense of No Regrets
 - Proposed by many historical, literary, and religious leaders, but they are wrong.
 - The outer expression and the inner experience differ widely.
 - “Every single decision brought me to where I am right now and made me who I am.”
 - Examples of a second marriage that successfully improved upon the first.
- ▶ Why regret makes us human
 - The ability to feel regret requires maturity and neurological health.
 - We travel through time, rewrite events, compare, and assess blame.
 - Regret doesn't only make us human; it makes us better.
- ▶ At Leasts and If Onlys
 - At leasts deliver comfort and consolation but no future correction.
 - If onlys make us feel worse but encourage future change and growth.

Four Core Regrets

1. Foundation Regrets

- ▶ Lack of foresight and conscientiousness.

2. Boldness Regrets

- ▶ Failure to take advantage of an opportunity or take a risk.

3. Moral Regrets

- ▶ Not doing the right thing; going against our conscience.

4. Connection Regrets

- ▶ Loss of relationships through rifts or drifts.

What to do with Your Regrets

1. For an Action Regret

- ▶ Undo it. Apologize, make amends, or try to repair the damage.
- ▶ At least it. Find the silver lining: think about how the situation could have turned out worse and appreciate that it didn't.

2. For Any Regret (Action or Inaction)

- ▶ Self-disclosure. Relive and relieve the regret by telling others or by writing about it privately.
- ▶ Self-compassion. Normalize and neutralize the regret by treating yourself the way you'd treat a friend.
- ▶ Self-distancing. Analyze and strategize about the lessons you've learned from the regret by zooming out in time, in space, or through language.

Using Anticipated Regrets in Your Decision Making

1. If dealing with one of the four core regrets:

- ▶ Make a choice
- ▶ Don't second-guess yourself
- ▶ Move on

2. If facing one of the core regrets

- ▶ Project yourself to a specific time in the future and ask yourself which choice will most help you build a solid foundation, take a sensible risk, do the right thing, or connect with others.

The Power of Regret - Breakout Session

Approach

- ▶ Join a breakout room
- ▶ A facilitator will guide the group
- ▶ Discuss as many or as few topics as you wish
- ▶ Rejoin the full group to wrap up

The Power of Regret - Discussion Questions

1. What spoke to you about Daniel Pink's take on the power of regret?
2. Which is more natural for you "if only" or "at least" thinking? How has that shaped your life?
3. What are you going to do differently when thinking about at least one regret that you have?
4. What was the core type of regret that interested you and why?
5. What do you think is the most difficult step in making every regret count self-disclosure, self-compassion or self-distancing?
6. Have you ever tried self-distancing techniques when trying to deal with a regret, problem or challenge? How did you do it and what was the result?
7. Which regret story or example from Daniel's book resonated with you and why?
8. The research in this book categorizes regret differently than other studies. How does this new categorization help you think differently about regret?
 - ▶ Foundation Regrets, Boldness Regrets, Moral Regrets, Connection Regrets

The Power of Regret

Wrap-up

- Regret makes us human.
- Regret makes us better.
- Regret gives us hope.