



SOARING THROUGH REGRET: THE 10 STEP GUIDE TO FREEDOM

“My one regret in life is that I am not someone else”. *Woody Allen*

Regret hurts. The pain is palpable, visceral and often unbearable. Trying to live through regret is like drowning – your body and your life running out of oxygen, arms and legs flailing and you know you are dying.

The memories of your bad decisions haunt you and they have overtaken your life, work and relationships. Memories themselves can become a phobia. The fear quickly converts to depression and then self-loathing and then back to anger – the **Regret Cycle** plays out in your life like a record needle stuck in the groove with no way to recover except through an aggressive and purposeful “nudge”.

It doesn't matter if you are a billionaire captain of industry or if you are unemployed. Nor does it matter what gender you are or culture you were raised in – **regret visits everyone**.

The difference, however, is **how we choose to soar** through it.

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In order to soar through regret you will need to push yourself through these 10 barriers:

1. **Decide who controls your life.** This has to do with two things. One, who will you **trust**? Is it that being or thing that created you? Perhaps you only trust yourself? But, remember it was you who got you into this position. Maybe it is a loved one? However, what if that loved one is still hurt from your decisions and is struggling themselves with how they have been impacted? Second, overcoming **fear**. Fear is a killer. It weakens us and starves us of oxygen. Where your faith is placed will dictate your fate in life. Decide where your help, where your rescue is going to come from. This is a critical first step because your burden will need to be placed somewhere. You are in no condition to continue to carry it alone. You need to be nimble of mind and emotion to overcome regret so you will need to lay your burden somewhere. Find that somewhere.
2. **Forgive yourself.** Simple really. Guilt is related to self-loathing. It is that deep anger that burns within you that you avoid thinking about. It is a psychological prison and the key to freedom seems to be out of your reach. Rather than having negative thoughts about your failure remind yourself of good memories and the future opportunities you want to pursue. This is not instant, however. It will take time and a lot of practice. But it must be done.
3. **Ask for forgiveness.** If you don't ask to be forgiven from those loved ones around you who are implicated in the bad decisions you have made then you will not get the unconditional support or love you will need to overcome regret. **You will need another** to get you through. The real barrier here is that if you blame the very person for your problems to whom you now need to go to for forgiveness becomes a challenge. Suspend that thought and get it done with sincerity and humility. **Risk** is not a pretty sight but it sure feels good inside when you come through the other side.
4. **Seek solitude.** It is not uncommon to become a workaholic or socially frenzied as this allows you to get "lost" in being busy and thereby avoiding the pain of thinking and actively "solving" bad decisions. Not surprisingly through this strategy people become outwardly successful but remain inwardly bankrupt. You will not learn if you don't reflect! **Reflection is critical to wisdom** and wisdom is what you will need to avoid making bad decisions in the future. So now is the time to think before you act. Go off the radar, take some time out or take a retreat. Solitude will become your best friend and teacher. You will need a lot of quiet times to begin to heal yourself of the painful memories of bad decisions. Confronting them in solitude is important to gaining control over your thinking. Stillness and quietness is an important part of psychological self-healing. Find a way of slowing time and yourself down in order to think systematically through the challenge before you.

5. **Muster courage.** Where are you going to get the inner strength to take control of your life and to make important and critical decisions without feeling that you will screw things up again? Here you will have to go deep. You will have to have a great deal of self-talk to **re-ignite your imagination**. You will need to focus on the positive things in your life and how you will invest in building and valuing those things in the near term. You will have to **tell yourself that you matter** and that your life can still have purpose. This is an incredibly difficult stage and process. Here the pain is unbearable as you cannot see past the memories of the decisions you have made that have got you here today as the remnants of those bad decisions are scattered all around you. You must stand up and force this one thought through your mind over and over again: *“I matter, I take responsibility, I will learn, I will overcome, I will start again, I will heal others around me”*. Make this your daily mantra.
6. **Pursue Authenticity.** Regret forces one to compensate. We often brag and show-off to compensate for feelings of weakness and inadequacy. You will need to fight showing off and bragging by learning to be humble and embrace your failure(s). This too is tough work as **our ego gets in the way**. Our ego wants to isolate us from others and it tells us “you are better than them”. This is not the way to go. We want to pretend that we are strong, able and not stupid. However, within that disingenuous compensation also lie the seeds of your future mistakes and failings. Find a way to be humble. Admit to others your mistakes and how you are trying to learn to not repeat those bad decisions. Humbleness trumps Ego.
7. **Pick a goal.** You need something positive to look forward to. Humans need to be in motion, to achieve, to do something. Having a goal that has both numeric and non-numeric factors will be very useful to get you focused. **Get that goal**. Create a project for yourself that gives you a reason to get up in the morning, a reason to go to work, a reason to sit at the computer. Without a reason, without a destiny in mind it won't matter what road you take, someone once said. Keeping your mind positively and meaningfully busy is also key to psychological well-being and problem solving to overcome the bad decisions we have made in the past. Goal setting can help our self-esteem and confidence. These ebb and flow when we live a life of and with regret.
8. **Plan the Day.** Begin to control your day not the week, month or year. This gives you a better locus of control – factors that you can influence. Thinking to next week or beyond can be a struggle if you are depressed. So begin small. If you have a calendar diary then there is pressure to fill up every page for the foreseeable future after all successful people are busy – that message is deflating and fuels our ego which in turn deceives our perception of reality that then get us into making bad and ill informed decisions. You need time and space to get control over your time and space. Make reality manageable. Start with a day.

9. **Seek Feedback.** We learn from the information we receive from others. It may be good or bad information but irrespective of those judgements you will need to implicate others now in your decision-making. Seek out the wise and the experienced. Those who have been where you have come from and from those who are at the destiny now that you are seeking. There is wisdom in this world that you are not tapping into. **Wisdom is a resource.** Soak it up. Use it. Remember, what gets you into bad decision-making is thinking “I know best”. Well you don't know best and that is why you are at this stage in your life today.
10. **Serve Others.** There is no soothing balm like the feeling of giving to others. It is incredibly cathartic and elevating. I don't mean a financial donation by pressing a button on PayPal. I mean investing your time and personal presence with someone who is in need and a stranger to you. Someone who needs unconditional love and support. Be their mirror reflection. Be the person they need to see in themselves. Can you do that? This is also a must step for you as it suppresses your ego and engages your “sense of others” or “the sense of the other”. That sense of others is critical to growth and avoiding isolation, which is the last thing you need in your life. It will also teach you that you do matter and that you do have something to offer and you are not a bad person but rather someone who has made a bad and regrettable decision in the past. Rather than punishing yourself why not help others? In helping them you will indeed help yourself.

So, if you want to **soar through regret** you need to create a new sense of self through a radical and purposeful process of introspection to transform your thinking and behaviour.

Pick just one of these 10 challenges/opportunities and start there. The order is not as critical as starting your journey to freedom with a clear plan and purpose.

So begin soaring today and don't let your Ego tell you otherwise.

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To assist both our organizational and personal clients, we are organised around the following 5 Divisions: **CONSULTING, COACHING, TRAINING, COUNSELLING and RESEARCH.**

We have a total of 20 innovative products that sit under those 5 divisions and we also tailor make products and solutions for our clients.

About Norm Murray

Norm Murray is CEO of nStratagem. See his full Bio in the "**People**" section of our site at www.nStratagem.com

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