



Making Medicine of Our Regrets

There is no such thing as a life without any regrets. We all have them. They may be small or large, recent or rooted in a long ago incident. Perhaps what most of us also have in common is wishing we didn't have them, wishing we hadn't made that choice, taken or not taken that life-changing action, or behaved inappropriately.

Perhaps we should not wish them away so quickly. Regret, according to Neal Roese, Ph.D., author of *If Only: How to Turn Regret Into Opportunity*, is an essential mental skill. "Regret is useful," Roese writes, "for signaling to people that it's time to change their strategy." When we allow our regretted choices to inform us and affect our behavior, they can be seen not only in the context of what is lost, but also what could be gained, and can serve as motivation to move forward.

Living with nagging regret as our daily companion, however, can become a burden that restricts our future and corrodes our self-esteem and emotional well-being. Even small regrets diminish our contentment and keep us from living in the present. In the case of crippling regrets, the results can be devastating. Psychologists have linked severe regret with a wide variety of mental and physical disorders, including sleep and mood problems, migraines, and skin conditions.

Making Medicine of Regret

The pain of regret can be eased by taking certain steps:

Clearly examine the regret. Step back from the feelings and determine why you did what you did. How can you learn from your error? Was there

even an error to begin with? Did your action or non-action cause real harm to yourself or others? Is your dwelling on regret causing more harm than the action/inaction did?

If you regret a path not chosen, imagine how your life might be if you had chosen that path. Now, think of all the joys in your current life that you wouldn't have if you had taken the other path.

Grieve, if necessary. Fully experiencing the feelings of regret will help you move forward. Tell the truth

about your powerlessness to change the past, and empower yourself in the present by making peace with the regret. Write it down, burn the paper or bury it in the earth, and then forget about it.

Accept the way it is. Recognize what you have learned and let it be final. Anything you have done is forgivable. Remember you're not alone; we've all made mistakes!

Do something about it. If the circumstances warrant it, ask for forgiveness and make amends. Take responsibility for anything you could have handled better. If you can, reverse the regretted behavior. No matter what your age, go back to school or pick up that trumpet you gave up after high school. Plan that trip to Australia. Say "I love you" to your sibling.

Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Make the most of your regrets.... To regret deeply is to live afresh." No matter how many years later, learn the lessons of your regrets, redirect your course or not—and open the door to a fresh start. ✧

"We often look so long and regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us."

—Alexander Graham Bell

10 Ways to Get the Most Out of Therapy

Getting the most out of your therapy sessions starts with showing up! Below are additional ways to be proactive in your own growth and development.

- 1. Know your objectives.** How do you want to feel? How will you know you're improving and growing, or when you're ready to stop?
- 2. Write your history.** Come to your first session with the history of: your life, any problems, relationships, substance use, hopes, dreams, etc. You'll be able to focus on the therapy faster.
- 3. Be honest.** Yes, with your therapist. But most importantly, with yourself.
- 4. Write in a journal.** Journaling helps you process your sessions and bring new material to the surface.
- 5. Prepare for appointments.** What's changed since your last session? Reflect on any insights, and bring them with you.
- 6. Give details.** Just telling your therapist, "We had a fight," doesn't uncover the dynamics in the relationship.
- 7. Notice patterns.** When things recur in your life, they are big clues and shouldn't be ignored.
- 8. Act on your insights.** Putting new insights into action makes great therapy sessions stick.
- 9. Take responsibility.** Your therapist is there to support you while *you* do the work of healing and transformation.
- 10. Be patient.** Change happens over time. With patience, you CAN shift to a place of greater peace. ✧

A Letter From



Michelle Barone, MA, MFT

I hope you find this newsletter helpful. I am always looking for ways to help my clients find joy and lead a fulfilling life. I have spent the last year studying a process that facilitates lasting change: NET, Neuro Emotional Technique.

I am now certified in NET, a mind-body technique that I find exceptional. I have personally experienced its benefits and clients report swift, long-lasting change. If you are ready to clear old patterns, reduce stress, and unlock hidden potential, it is time to experience NET.

In line with mind-body healing, I continue to marvel at the changes that occur for people when they increase their use of whole food and whole food supplements, and eat in accordance with their unique body chemistry. Support your mental health by insuring that your physical health is also well cared for.

Your mental and physical health is your most important asset. Take time and invest in yourself.

Currently, I work with individuals, couples, families, children and teens. I bring my knowledge of interpersonal neurobiology, mind/body therapy and alternative health/education to my work. I maintain a large referral base of supportive health care providers. I currently serve on the board of the Glendale Area Mental Health Professional Association as the e-list facilitator.

Services Offered

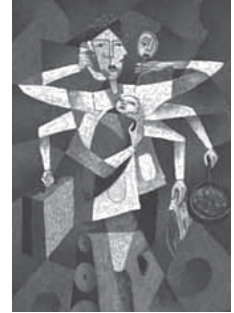
- Individual, couple, family counseling
- Healing grief and loss
- Stress management
- Alternative education/homeschooling support

*Parenting classes and support groups
Office and phone sessions by appointment. Please visit my website www.michellebarone.net for listings of groups, classes and speaking engagements.*

Treat yourself gently,

Michelle Barone, MA, MFT

How Well Do You Handle Overwhelm?



When overwhelm strikes, it's easy to feel powerless and immobile. Everything feels too big. It's not just everyday busyness and packed schedules. When we're overwhelmed, just making dinner becomes a monumental effort. Take the Thriving quiz below to see how well you've learned to deal with overwhelm.

True False

- 1. I try to remember that I don't have to do everything myself. I ask others for help and gather a support team about me.
- 2. As often as I can remember, I stop for a moment and take several deep, relaxing breaths.
- 3. I say "No" to new requests for my time, and I try to renegotiate previous commitments so that I can regroup.
- 4. I resist the frantic voice inside that yells, "You don't have time!" and take a little break to sit or lie down for a bit, because I know it will make me feel as though I actually have more time.
- 5. I watch a funny video. (Laughter has a very positive effect on brain chemistry.)
- 6. I light a candle and keep it near me.
- 7. I go outdoors for a few moments or even a few hours. Taking time to notice the glorious details of nature—a leaf, a snowflake, a ladybug—is very regenerative.
- 8. Even if for only 10 minutes, I do some form of movement—dancing, jogging, walking, jumping jacks. (Exercise increases adrenaline and endorphins, the body's natural antidepressants.)
- 9. When I need to drown out the negative chatter in my overwhelmed state, I sing quietly or hum to myself. It soothes me and helps me focus on "one step at a time."
- 10. I have a practice of meditating or praying each morning, which keeps me tethered to myself during the times that overwhelm wants to scatter my energy to the wind.
- 11. I write in my journal as fast as I can for 15 minutes without editing or judging; this "brain dump" helps clear my mind and move away from overwhelm.
- 12. On my walks (with the dog or alone), I whisper to myself all the things for which I forgive myself.
- 13. When the pressure of overwhelm feels unbearable, I listen to evocative violin, cello or piano music that helps me to cry. The crying helps wash away the overwhelm and bring me back to my strength.
- 14. I keep a list of all the things that help me re-connect with myself, that help me re-collect and re-focus my energy inside, so that when overwhelm begins to visit, I can remind myself of things that have worked in the past.

*Overcoming overwhelm isn't really about measuring accomplishment. It's about connecting with what has meaning for us, with what feeds and enlivens us. Feeling connected then connects us to the natural fuel for getting things done. If you'd like some help working through overwhelm and aligning better with your values and needs, don't hesitate to call. **

When the Internet Becomes a Problem

The Internet is a wonderful tool. You can network with colleagues, reconnect with old friends, and accomplish in minutes such tasks like research, which used to take days.

So what's the problem?

The Internet becomes a problem when we lose productivity, we become addicted to it, and when it becomes a substitute for real experiences with people, places and things.

Real Life vs. Web Life

George spends five to eight hours a day on the Web, traveling among his pages on several social networking sites. He presents himself alternately as an assertive and confident Casanova, an opinionated law student and a successful entrepreneur.

In real life, George is none of these. Painfully shy and self-critical, George keeps to himself.

"I feel more like myself when I'm online," he says. But what he really means is, "I feel more like who I wish I was."

Virtual Infidelity

Every time Cynthia's husband heads upstairs to the office, her stomach tightens and her jaw clenches.

Cynthia confronted Victor after reading an email from a woman she had never heard of, who apparently lived in another country. Victor denied having an affair. After all, he had never actually seen the other woman, much less touched her, and he had no plans to do so. "A bunch of typed words don't amount to an affair," he maintained. To him, it was just talking and exploring fantasies.

But to Cynthia, the intimacy expressed in the email was more threatening than a purely sexual relationship. She wondered why her partner couldn't be that intimate with her.

Simulated Experience

Four-year-old Eddie spends hours behind a computer screen studying whales and porpoises; he can identify almost anything that swims. But Eddie has never seen a real fish, although he lives near the ocean and a world-class aquarium.

Like a pint-sized hermit peering out of his window, Eddie, like huge numbers of children today, is learning about nature on a computer screen, not from direct contact with the natural world. His experience is only a simulated experience, which increasing numbers of people are willing to accept as sufficient.

Time Leakage

Handling email and surfing the Web can eat hours from every day. Every hour behind the keyboard is 60 minutes not spent doing something else. There's also an impact on your productivity. If you're surfing the Web or answering personal emails at work, you're stealing from your employer. If you're self-employed you may be squandering valuable focus and energy on things that don't matter.

Repetitive Strain Injuries

Repetitive Strain Injuries are cumulative and can strike overnight. Practice good ergonomics no matter what, and if you feel any burning or numbing in your arms or hands, get off the computer and take a break. Find out about special stretches you can do and never work through pain.

Counteracting the Tide

There is no question that the Internet is here to stay. As our culture continues its dive into this brave new world, what can we do to avoid being swept away? Here are some things to try:

- Save your personal email for the end of the workday and set a time limit beforehand for how long you'll spend online.
- Plan activities at night and on weekends so that boredom doesn't send you to the computer.
- Take a class in something you've always wanted to learn, such as astronomy, fencing, or photography.
- Volunteer at a food bank, teach reading to adults who never learned, or join groups that pick up litter.
- Take up yoga or dancing to help your body cope with all that sitting at the computer.
- Explore a creative pursuit such as writing, painting, or cooking; try something you've always wanted to do.
- Go hiking, camping, or to sporting events; spend more time outside.
- Plan family outings to parks and local festivals. Check your local paper to learn what's going on.
- Make weekly no-screen dates with your spouse or partner. Look into each other's eyes over dinner and share about your week.

Ultimately, it's a matter of balance and awareness. Explore the amazing worlds to which the Internet offers access, just don't forget to spend more time in the real one. *



What's That You Said? The Fears that Prevent Us from Speaking Up

Do you value being seen and heard? Do you want to have truly successful relationships? Do you want to make an impact on others? Then speak up! Of course, for some people, that's easier said than done. You might prefer to train wild lions than tell another person what's really on your mind. But it is possible to develop an assertiveness connected to head and heart that clears the way for honest, empowered living—without being rude to others or surrendering to “niceness.”

“We all need to learn to dance in rhythm to the beat of our own soul,” writes Kelly Bryson in his book, *Don't Be Nice, Be Real: Balancing Passion for Self with Compassion for Others*.

Those who stay mum when they would be better off speaking their mind do so for a variety of reasons:

- **Fear of being rejected.** Any time you risk disclosing yourself, you become vulnerable. Communications skills, such as those taught in Non-Violent Communication (NVC) or Powerful Non-Defensive Communication (PNDC), teach how to combine vulnerability with strength and

compassion for powerful connections.

- **Fear of what you would tell yourself if you or any requests you make are rejected.** If you speak up and tell your officemate how much you would like to go out with her, you definitely risk rejection. But if you are rejected, does that *really* mean you're unlovable? Destined to a life alone? Or is that just a story?

- **Fear of hurting feelings.** Related to this is the belief that it is better to please others, even at your own expense. As Bryson points out, being Mr. or Mrs. Nice Guy or Gal is actually a form of violence to yourself and others, and an escape from a fully lived life.

- **Fear of “rocking the boat,” or upsetting the status quo.** The writer Muriel Rukeyser spoke to this fear in her memorable quote: “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.”

- **Fear that you have nothing worth saying.** Years of poor self-image can lead to this.

- **Fear of sparking a conflict.** If you have an abusive or volatile family history, you may have learned to keep quiet or be invisible to avoid confrontation. And yet

the danger is that constant suppression of powerful feelings can lead to frustration and possibly aggressive or abusive behavior. As Rollo May writes in his book, *Power and Innocence*, powerlessness is the precursor to violence.

It is important to distinguish between being assertive and being aggressive. Aggression trespasses on another's boundaries without regard for feelings. Assertiveness, on the other hand, communicates feelings, thoughts and needs clearly and directly.

Speaking up after years of zipping your lips may not be easy. You may need to take baby steps—take classes or workshops, consult with a counselor, join an assertiveness support group. But the payoff is more effective relationships, genuine intimacy and, more than anything, an increased feeling of self-respect and empowerment. *



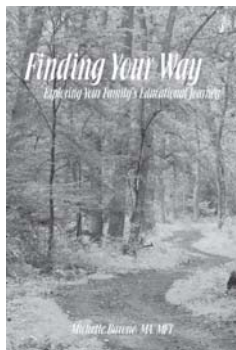
Michelle Barone, MA MFT

Sunland, CA

Phone: 818-951-7744

Website: www.michellebarone.net

E-mail: Michelle@michellebarone.net



Michelle's new book, *Finding Your Way:*

Exploring Your Family's Educational

Journey, is now available through lulu.com.

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www.michellebarone.net.