

289. Regret



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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is Better Than Happy, episode 289: Regret.

Did you know that you can live a life that's even better than happy? My name is Jody Moore. I'm a master certified life coach and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And if you're willing to go with me I can show you how. Let's go.

Hey everybody, how's it going? Welcome to the podcast, 289. I hope that everything is going well for you in your world. I hope that you are getting through winter, getting through the end of this time of Covid. It's going to end eventually you guys. I mean the part where our lives look so different is going to end anyway, that change is coming. I'm excited for it. I don't know about you, I'm kind of ready, kind of over all this.

So I want to talk about regret today and I'll just tell you why. I had a different topic in mind which I will still cover in a future episode. But the reason I want to talk about regret is I have a program where I work with certified coaches who want to advance their coaching skills and it's sort of like getting a master's degree in coaching. So you do have to already be a certified coach to go through that program. But it's pretty awesome, that program. I love, love, love teaching advanced coaching, I like teaching at an advanced level like that.

I like working with coaches who understand the basics and we can go a little bit deeper. And part of this program, I listen to some of their coaching calls, some replays of their coaching. And I was listening to a call today and the coach was coaching a woman, a girl who is a mother, a young mother. And they were talking about regret and I kept wanting to jump into the call and say, "No, you've got to tell her this. You've got to teach her that." And the coach was doing an amazing job by the way. It's just that's kind of my nature is that I have ideas always that I think people should hear.

And I'm a human being with opinions but because I've coached a lot of people on regret, and I've been able to gain some understanding that I

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want to offer to you today. The way I want to teach you this is I'm going to group it into four lies. I think regret is one of those emotions, and there are a handful of them but it's one of those ones that feels necessary important and it's not. That's why I'm calling them lies. I think regret itself is kind of a big lie to be honest.

So, I'm going to break it down into the four lies and I'm going to start with lie number one which is what I just said which is that regret feels useful or responsible. Now, regret is a feeling or an emotion. And feelings and emotions feel different ways in our bodies, so none of us would say that regret probably feels good. But when I say it feels useful or responsible I mean a part of us believes that is useful or responsible.

So I've coached so many people who tell me about something from their past, something that they did or something that they didn't do and then they tell me that they feel regret. Now, it's very important that you understand that your regret is not coming from the thing that you did, or the thing that you didn't do, or the thing that happened in the past. It is not coming from the past. Regret can't come up from the past and jump inside your body and make you feel anything.

The regret that you are feeling right now is coming from a sentence or thought that you are thinking right now about the past. But many of us believe when we're feeling regret that that sentence or thought is important or useful to think about. And I want to offer to you that that is a lie. It is not important or useful for you to walk around thinking about the thing that you did, wishing you hadn't done it. Or thinking about the thing you didn't do questioning whether you should have done it and generating regret for yourself. It's not important and it's not responsible or useful in most cases.

I can never give absolutes and say that it's never useful because who knows, we really have to take a closer look to determine. But I will say that I can't think of one time right now off the top of my head when regret would

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be useful or responsible. I know it feels that way, I know it feels like you need to punish yourself.

I'm going to use the example from the coaching call I was listening to. And of course I'll keep all the names out of it and everything. But then I'm going to use another example as well because I think that we have different thoughts come up around different areas and different issues. So the example I want to use was on the coaching call there was a young woman who said that she has a son who's autistic. And when she reads studies that say vaccinations may cause autism then she feels regret.

Or sometimes she has friends who will say to her, "Hey, I just read another study or another book, or there's new data, new research saying that vaccines in babies may cause autism." And then this sweet young girl, sweet young mom feels regret. Now, remember, she doesn't feel regret because of the study or because of her friend saying that, or because she read it. She feels regret because she thinks the thought, maybe I shouldn't have vaccinated my son. Maybe if I hadn't he wouldn't have autism today.

Now, the reason I say that it's not useful or responsible for her to walk around thinking that is because I don't have a time machine. Do you have a time machine? If you do then maybe we want to feel regret. Maybe we want to go back in time and not get our child vaccinated, or not do the thing, or do the thing that we think we should have done. But if you don't have a time machine then I see zero point in feeling regret. Regret does not make you a better mother today. Regret does not help you find better resources and solutions to help your child who may be struggling.

Regret does not make what you did in the past right, or wrong, or anything else. All regret does is punish you and diminish your ability to be resourceful and creative and impactful today and going forward. That's it. And it just makes you feel bad. When you feel bad you're less effective than when you feel good.

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Now, like I said, I'm going to use another example because some of you are like, "Well, yes, of course that sweet young mother should not be beating herself up like that." By the way I would also coach her around what if it's true? It could be true that had you not vaccinated your child he would not have autism. That might be true and you still don't need to feel regret over it because for sure you were supposed to vaccinate your child because you did. And for sure you love your child then and love your child now. And you are doing what you thought was the best thing.

And if you were supposed to think that not vaccinating him was the best thing then you would have found that information, you would have thought that and believed that and gone that direction back then but you didn't. So maybe your child wouldn't have autism. But if your child is supposed to have challenges and struggles and autism is one version of them, but he could get them in another version and there's unfortunately nothing we can do as mothers to prevent our children from struggling.

So if something that we did 'created' it or caused it I still don't see the point in regret unless you have a time machine. So let me give you another example like I said. Sorry, I got off on a little tangent there because I just love my clients so much, I want to reach in and be like "Stop, stop beating yourself up." The most peace will come when you realize it could be true. It could be true that if I hadn't vaccinated him he wouldn't have autism and it still doesn't mean I shouldn't have done it. Honestly, because you did do it, you were obviously supposed to, you made the decision that felt right.

Okay, now let's say you had an affair, let's say you had an affair. Now, should you regret that? Well, I don't know. Let's see. Is there an upside? So having had an affair doesn't make you feel regret. Ending the affair, whatever else happens next, none of that makes you feel regret today, remember the only thing that makes you feel regret today is what you're thinking today. Should you regret that? Because I mean some of us believe that that violates some of our moral beliefs, commandments, whatever you want to call it. Should you regret it?

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I would give the same answer that I gave before which is if you have a time machine and you can go back in time and not have an affair then yes, let's regret. Let's go back and try to correct it and change it and then we won't feel regret anymore and then we can move on. But if you don't have a time machine then I don't see how feeling regret today will improve your current marriage, or relationship, or make right what you've done 'wrong', it really doesn't. Do you know what helps you to do that? Compassion, commitment, determination, four word movement.

Regret is so based in the past you guys, it's seeped in the past. It comes from thoughts about the past. I would much rather you direct your thoughts to the present and the future. So instead of I'm such a terrible person, I can't believe I did that, what's the matter with me? I have so much regret about what I did and we just stay stuck in the past. How about who do I want to be now? Who do I want to be today? What do I want to do moving forward? How can I try to mend damage that I've done? How do I apologize?

How do I be the person that I actually am and always was? I just wasn't being that person in the past, how do I be that version of me now? I am still amazing, and complete, and whole, and just as valuable as I was before I did the thing. So how do I be that person now? I'll tell you, it's not by seeping yourself in regret. So that was only lie number one, I'm just getting started. I've got three more. Regret is not useful or responsible like your brain believes it is.

Lie number two goes right along with it, which is that you just should feel this. I've heard clients say different versions of this, it sounds kind of like it's just not fair for me to not feel it. It's not right for me to let it go. I don't deserve to not feel terrible because of whatever it is that I did or didn't do in the past. I don't deserve better.

And this is again a toxic trap you guys, this is what Satan wants you to believe. He's like, "You don't deserve to feel any better. You screwed up.

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You're not a good person clearly", because if you believe that guess what you'll create? That, you will create evidence for that, you'll continue to be that in some version or other. It will keep you stuck if you can believe that. So you don't have to earn the right to feel good, you guys. And you don't have to punish yourself by feeling bad. That doesn't make amends for anything, it really doesn't.

I don't even believe that feeling bad is very much a part of the repentance process. I think godly sorrow, which is in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints one of the things we believe is one of the steps of repentance is godly sorrow. And I think that godly sorrow is oh my goodness, that's not me. That's not who I am. I'm a daughter of God. I am better than that. I am bigger than that. I am capable of more than that.

That kind of thinking doesn't feel discouraging and down and regretful. It feels like commitment. It feels like inspiration. It feels like motivation. It doesn't feel the same as regret, so you don't have to punish yourself by feeling bad and you don't have to earn the right to feel good, it just is your right.

Alright, lie number three, this is a big one too and I can hear some of you might be thinking this right now. If I don't feel regret then I'm going to keep making mistakes, maybe even that same mistake. If I did something that I think was terrible and I don't feel regret then I'm going to keep doing that thing. And that's where again I would say that's a lie, complete lie. Do you know why we do 'bad' things? Because we feel bad, I know that sounds really overly simplified. It's the truth. We don't do 'bad' things when we're feeling good. I keep putting bad in quotes because bad is subjective.

Every one of us gets to decide what is good, what is bad, what is our best behavior, what is sabotaging behavior, what is morally right and wrong. All of that's up for grabs but even if you want to decide that was bad, that was wrong, that was evil, or that was just not what I want to do going forward.

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Feeling bad doesn't generate useful behavior going forward. It makes it much, much harder going forward.

You've heard the saying, "Hurt people hurt people." I love that. It's so true. People don't lash out in hate, or violence, or anger, or anything destructive if they're not coming from a place of hurt, or fear, or something that is not our highest selves. When we feel good we do more good.

When we feel bad we do more 'bad'. It might be eating junk food that you don't want to eat. It might be not following through on the things you said you were going to do for the day. So it could be at that end of the spectrum or it could be much more severe mistreatment of yourself or others. Any of that is coming from negative emotion of which regret is one. That is not coming from love, and trust, and goodness, and peace, and compassion and curiosity. So your job is to decide how you want to feel about yourself because it will determine what you will do going forward.

It is not required to feel regret in order to completely abandon some kind of behavior that isn't serving you. You can feel commitment instead. You could feel curious instead. You could feel motivated or inspired instead, and any of those will take you 10 times further than regret.

Number four, final lie of regret is that it's something that just happens to us. So I've been talking about regret about things in the past. But sometimes I coach people who tell me, "I'm trying to make the right decision here, Jody. I'm trying to make a choice or I'm trying to get myself moving, and take certain actions, and accomplish certain things in my life because I just don't want to regret anything. I don't want to look back and regret it." And this can show up in all kinds of ways.

Sometimes I coach people who say, "I'm trying to decide if I should have another child or not. I just don't want to one day regret it if I decide later that I should have had another one and I didn't, I might regret it." Or I have people tell me, "I'm trying to decide if I should build a business, or if I

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should invest this money in this business, or, “If I should leave this marriage or stay in this marriage.” There’s all kind of decisions. And whenever people tell me I’m just trying to make the right choice because I don’t want to have regret one day.

What they’re telling me is that they believe that regret is just something that would happen to them and that it would be a result of something outside of them or something from their then past, which is not true. Regret doesn’t just happen to you. Regret is something you create within you with your brain, with the story you believe.

Let’s say you want to write a book and your hope with that book is that you can sell a bunch of copies and that people will love it. And you’re not writing that book because you’re afraid that you might write a book that nobody likes and nobody will buy it, or nobody will publish it, then you think you might regret it. You might regret the topic you chose or the type of book, or even just spending the time to write your book.

So if somebody comes to me with that kind of scenario I say to them, “Did you know that you could write a book and you could just decide today that no matter what happens you will choose not to feel regret.” You can just make that choice right now.

You can say, “Listen, I’m going to write a book and maybe I’m going to sell a lot of copies of that book, that’s my plan. And maybe people are going to love my book, that’s my hope. But no matter what, even if I try everything I can and I can’t make those things happen, I will not regret it. I make the decision right now not to think about this in a way that creates regret.” Because there are always many, many options about how you can think about something.

So even if everyone hates that book, or nobody reads that book except your mom because she loves you, you can decide to thank yourself for going through the exercise of writing a book because not very many people

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can say that they've written a book. And think about the discipline it would require for you to sit down and write that book and think about how much writing practice you would have as a result of writing that book. And you can just decide that you will not regret it no matter what.

You can choose right now you guys to not regret the past, if you choose to never think about things in a way that generates regret. You can just decide right now that no matter what, in 10 years when you look back on the decision that you made right now, that you will get your back and you will say, "Hey you, I got you. Thank you past me for making what seemed like the best choice. I have zero regret. I've got your back."

And you can do that today about your past self from however many years ago you want to or from yesterday. You can decide to wake up in the morning and not regret the bowl of ice-cream you ate last night before bed. Did you know this? And if you choose that you will create a much more extraordinary life for yourself instead of what many of us do instead which is create a not very fun, not very kind relationship with ourselves. And we minimize what we're able to accomplish in our lives as a result.

So instead of, "I can't believe I ate that ice-cream, what's the matter with me? Why did I do that? I wish I hadn't. Now the scale is up, now I'm whatever." No, instead you say, "Wasn't that delicious ice-cream we had last night? That was good. I don't think I'm going to eat ice-cream today. I think I'm going to try paying attention to why I think I need ice-cream at night instead. And yes, I feel a little bit inflamed today and yes the scale is up a little bit today and that's okay. I can handle all of that.

We did have ice-cream, that was fun. What do we want to do now? Do we want to keep eating ice-cream every night? Maybe not, I don't know, but zero part of me is going to choose to regret it because I was just a human trying to survive one moment of being human, I was trying to survive being bored, or being exhausted from taking care of kids all day, or just being restless and not knowing what to do with myself. Or answering my brain

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that's like, "We should have ice-cream." That's all that was, I get it. I got you past me, I get why you did that."

No regrets, now what, who do we want to be today? Do we really want to keep eating ice-cream? Let's make a conscious decision. But let's decide that no matter what we will not beat up our past selves because again unless you have a time machine and you can go back to last night and not eat ice-cream, I see zero point in lingering on this, zero point.

You start improving your relationship with you being kind to past you and you will be amazed at how much easier it will be to make the kinds of decisions that help you be the person you want to be and achieve the goals you want to achieve in your life. It's true.

Alright you guys, thanks for joining me today. I love you. No regrets. Let's think about who you want to be today and who you want to think about going forward. It's such a better use of your brain. I will see you next week. Take care. Bye bye.

Who is your life coach? If you don't have one I would be so honored to be your coach. I created a virtual coaching program called Be Bold that I want to invite you to join me in. We can address challenges, we can work on goals, and we can do it in so many different ways.

We have group coaching, individual private coaching, and online chats along with hundreds of hours of courses and content that I've created just for you. When you're ready to really take what you're learning on the podcast to the 10x level, then come check out Be Bold at JodyMoore.com/membership.