Achieve Release

Made poor choices? Let go, then move on.

June 1, 2011 By Kate Ferguson

Regretting past decisions or actions is a funny thing. Although your mistakes are history, you're obsessing over them in the present—which often clouds your future.

How do you break this negative cycle? First, accept whatever it is that you've done, advises therapist Elisa English, PhD, a licensed clinical social worker in New York City. Then, move on. "And allow yourself to cry if you must."

Second, speak to someone. "And that means talking to someone you know and trust or getting professional help," English says.

The reality is you cannot change something you did in the past. And, yes, sometimes if you've wronged someone, the burden of guilt can follow you far into the future. When this happens, it's tempting to unload the burden, to confess the wrongdoing. But in fact, the best course of action is to consider before you confess.

Still, if it helps you to reveal what you did, then spill it, English advises. "But if it really doesn't make a difference in the life of the person you've wronged, you don't need to create any unnecessary drama," she adds.

As English sums up, the best approach to regrettable actions is this: Benefit by using what happened to help you heal mentally and emotionally so you can grow and learn from your experiences. What more positive outcome can you ask for than that?

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