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Scott Friedman is a motivational humourist who inspires and entertains with fun-filled, interactive and content-rich programmes. Let's learn from Scott on how we can celebrate small wins in our workplaces and celebrate with customers! Check out our Leaderonomics Show here at: bit.ly/LDRtlisScottFriedman

Belief alone does not yield success. Great breakthroughs can only be accomplished through hard work, planning, leadership and practice, but without the fire of belief, most people quit. What are the things in your life that you want to do but everyone thinks are impossible? Maybe even you believe they are impossible. Perhaps it is a goal you have given up on, or a target you think can't be achieved. Maybe you think it is impossible to turn your business around or to inspire your employees? Check out this article on [Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/RTbeliefsystem](http://Leaderonomics.com:bit.ly/RTbeliefsystem)

■ Jeff Haden is a ghostwriter, speaker, LinkedIn Influencer, contributing editor to Inc., and the author of *The Motivation Myth: How High Achievers Really Set Themselves Up to Win*. The *Motivation Myth* overturns the beloved (but false) idea that motivation leads to success. Instead, small successes lead to constant motivation – and let you achieve your biggest goals while also having more fun. To share your thoughts with us, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.



HOW TO



WHAT PEOPLE REGRET MOST

5 WAYS TO MAKE SURE YOU NEVER DO

By JEFF HADEN
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LOOK forward and the path seems uncertain, the future impossible to predict. Look back and all your dots seem to connect... except, of course, the dots that mark the actions you *didn't* take.

Those dots? They don't connect to anything – except regrets.

Research shows that more people regret things they didn't do than the things they did, even if things they did turned out badly.

(After all, with time and effort, you can fix almost any mistake – but you can't go back and do the things you dreamed of doing but didn't, which means you can only think about how today would be different if you had.)

A new study takes the idea even further, probing the kinds of regrets we have about the people we don't *become*, a natural extension of the actions we didn't *take*.

Researchers focused on three things:

- Our **actual** selves: The traits and abilities we think we possess, i.e. who we think we are.

- Our **ought** selves: The traits and abilities we think we *should* possess, i.e. who we think we should be (think responsibilities and obligations).

- Our **ideal** selves: The traits, abilities, and accomplishments we would like to possess, i.e. our goals, hopes and dreams. It makes sense that we regret not doing the things we think we are supposed to do: Working harder at our professions, working harder to be healthier. It's natural to regret not working harder on things we *ought* to accomplish.

But research shows most people (72%) feel regret related to their ideal self as opposed to their ought self (28%).

In fact, when asked to name their single biggest life regret, 76% of participants cite an action not taken that would have helped them realise their ideal self.

As one of the authors of the study says, "When we evaluate our lives, we think about whether we're heading toward our ideal selves, becoming the person we'd like to be. Those are the regrets that are going to stick with you, because they are what you look at through the windshield of life.

"The 'ought' regrets are potholes on the road. Those were problems, but now they're behind you. To be sure, there are certain failures to live up to our 'ought' selves that are extremely painful and can haunt a person forever; so many great works of fiction draw upon precisely that fact.

"But for most people, those types of regrets are far outnumbered by the ways in which they fall short of their ideal selves."

In short, we most regret thinking we didn't reach our full potential. We most regret not becoming the person we feel we could have become... if we only had tried.

Because that is one mistake you can never go back and fix. But it is one mistake you can stop making *today*.

To start taking action to realise your ideal self, do the following.

1 Always make your goal tangible and specific.

Say you want to get in better shape. "Get in better shape" sounds great, but what does it mean? Nothing. It's just a wish.

"Lose 10 pounds in 30 days" is a specific, measurable, objective goal.

Not only do you know what you want to accomplish but setting that specific goal also allows you to create a process to get you there. You can set up your workout schedule and follow the plan.

Always set a goal that allows you to work backward and create a process designed to achieve it. It's impossible to know exactly what to do every day when

you don't know exactly what you want to achieve.

2 Always make your goal matter.

If you want to get in better shape so other people will think you look better at the beach this summer, you're unlikely to follow through.

But if you want to get in better shape because you want to feel better about yourself, or to set an example for your kids, then you're much more likely to stick with it.

Now your goal has meaning. Not to your doctor, or to strangers on the beach, but to *you*.

3 Always make your goal a positive goal.

"Stop criticising other people in meetings" is a great goal, but it's a negative goal. It's a lot harder to give up or stop doing something than it is to embrace a new and positive challenge.

Plus, setting a goal like "stop eating sweets" means you constantly have to choose to avoid temptation – and since willpower is often a finite resource, why put yourself in a position of constantly needing to choose?

Always pick positive goals. That way, you'll be working to *become* something new, rather than to *avoid* being something you no longer wish to be.

4 Always set your goal, and then forget your goal.

I know... we're told to focus on our goals.

Yet one of the biggest reasons people give up on huge goals is the distance between *here*, where you are today, and *there*, where you someday hope to be.

If today, you're able to run only a mile, and your goal is to run a marathon, the distance between here and there seems insurmountable. So you give up, because there's no way you'll get from *here* to *there*.

That's why almost all successful peo-

ple set a goal and then focus all their attention on the process necessary to achieve that goal.

Sure, the goal is still out there. But what they care about most is what they need to do *today*. And when they accomplish that, they feel happy about today.

And they feel good about themselves, because they've accomplished what they set out to do *today*. That sense of accomplishment gives them all the motivation they need to do what they need to do when *tomorrow* comes – because success, even tiny, incremental success, is the best motivation of all.

When you savour the small victories, you get to feel good about yourself every day, because you no longer feel compelled to compare the distance between here and there.

If you do what you planned to do today, you're a winner.

5 Always focus on the daily process.

The key to long-term success is to create a process that guarantees a series of small improvements. Usually, that means what you do won't be that different from what other successful people do.

Pick someone who has achieved something you want to achieve. Deconstruct his/her process. Then follow it.

Along the way, you might make small corrections as you learn what works best for you, but never start by doing what you *want* to do, or what *feels* good, or what you *think* might work.

Do what is *proven* to work. Otherwise, you'll give up, because the process you create won't yield those small successes that keep you motivated and feeling good about yourself.

If you think about it, it is the perfect definition of success. And, it is the perfect way to avoid the regret of not becoming your ideal self.