**The Biggest Wastes Of Time We Regret When We Get Older**

We spend a lot of energy looking for shortcuts to save time, and sure, those shortcuts add up. But when I look back, my biggest time regrets aren't spending too much time on Twitter or mismanaging my daily tasks. Those are bad habits, but there are bigger, more systematic time wasters that have really gotten in the way. Fixing these will free up a massive amount of time and energy.

## Not Asking for Help

My first week on my first job out of university, my boss handed me a huge spreadsheet. He told me to organize it in a way that made zero sense to me. Being a quiet, timid person, I simply nodded, walked back to my desk and stared at that spreadsheet for like an hour, hoping to make some sense of it.

Finally, my coworker came in, and I confessed I had no idea what to do. He broke it down for me, then dropped some advice that's stuck with me ever since: "You might feel dumb asking questions, but you look dumber when you don't get it because you failed to ask."

It was harsh, but true. And not only did I look like an arse, I could've also saved a fair amount of time that day by simply asking my boss what he meant. It made me wonder how much time I had wasted by not asking for help over the years. As dumb as you might feel asking questions, it's the fastest way to get an answer.

Similarly, asking for help is a great way to, well, get help. This is why networking and finding a mentor are hugely valuable. If you feel stuck in your career or need to learn new skills and have no idea how to get started, talking to other people in your field will go a long way. Even if it's just shooting someone a short email, asking for help is like a shortcut for your career.

Here's another way to look at it: if you're not asking for help, you're probably not challenging yourself enough. If you have all the answers, you're not learning new skills, trying new things or moving forward and out of your comfort zone. There are a handful of reasons we don't ask for help, but it's usually because we're too proud or scared, and that's a huge waste of time, because it keeps you from moving forward.

## Trying to Make Bad Relationships Work

Relationships require maintenance, but there's a difference between maintaining a good relationship and trying to force a bad one that doesn't make much sense to begin with.

There's a lot of emotion in romance and friendships, so sometimes it's hard to tell when you should keep trying or you should just call it quits. Like a lot of people, I made some common bad decisions that wasted both my time and the time of the person I was with. For example, (1) Thinking I have more in common with the person I’m dating than I actually do. (2) Being in a relationship just to avoid loneliness. (3) Staying in a relationship only out of fear of losing the person.

There are good reasons for wanting to make a relationship work, but those aren't good ones. They cloud your judgment, prolong your unhappiness and distract you from things that matter to you most. At the same time, it's hard to say all bad relationships are a total waste of time, because you learn a lot about yourself from them. That's a valid silver lining, but still, the sooner you learn those lessons, the better.

Similarly, not dealing with the emotional impact of a breakup is also a big waste of time. When a relationship ends, we usually go through the typical stages of grief associated with loss. It's easy to get comfortable with denial and convince ourselves we don't really care and we're fine. In reality, ignoring the pain only prolongs it. Our work suffers; the rest of our relationships suffer.

## Dwelling on Your Mistakes and Shortcomings

Learning from your mistakes is one thing. Dwelling on them wastes your time, diminishes your confidence, and keeps you from getting on with your life.

Dwelling also makes you more apt to repeat your mistakes. In a recent study published in the Journal of Consumer Psychology, researchers asked subjects to spend money during an imaginary trip to the mall. Before "shopping", some subjects were asked to recall a past financial mistake. They found those subjects were more likely to incur debt. A press release for the study concluded:

Perhaps the most surprising, Haws said, is that searching through the past can negatively affect behavior, depending on the ease of recall, even when past examples are positive...Instead of dwelling on the past, Haws said, her research into behavior suggests that setting goals for the future can positively change present behavior...In short, if we want to have better self-control, "Look forward," Haws says. "Don't look back."

When you think about your own experiences, it probably makes sense. Dwelling makes you feel like a failure. When I feel like a failure, it's easy to tell myself there's no point in trying, because I already suck. (Hence, getting further into debt when you already feel like an overspender.)

Of course, you don't want to skip over your mistakes and ignore them either. The goal is to glean something from them, then release the failure.

In order to let the past go, you must forgive yourself officially.