



Success includes learning to deal with bad decisions

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Everybody makes bad decisions. Sometimes they're little ones, such as lying to a friend about something trivial. Sometimes they're a lot bigger, such as driving drunk or taking drugs. Human beings have a tendency to rack up mistakes like points in a video game, and nobody's immune. It doesn't matter if you're old, young, rich or poor, saint or sinner. We all have our set of wince-worthy moments.

The good thing about bad decisions is that we can overcome them. We can apologize, make amends to family, and reach out to get help when we're so far down a hole and can't get out on our own.

The bad thing is that few actually reach out.

Many people let bad decisions fester, letting negative situations get worse and worse until it's too late.

I know this firsthand. For the past few years, I have been battling chronic acid reflux, a medical condition where acid escapes the stomach and harms the soft tissue of the esophagus.

You know acid reflux as heartburn, that awful, painful feeling underneath your breastbone after you've had spicy tacos or far too much to eat at a barbecue. For most

people, antacids take care of the pain. For those of us with the chronic condition, heartburn is a constant agony and a way of life.

I know why I developed acid reflux: a series of bad decisions that I didn't fix while I had the chance. Six cups of coffee in the morning were routine. I put spicy curry in everything I cooked. I stressed myself out at my job. I ate badly. And when I developed acid reflux, I just ignored it, which made it worse.

This condition, left untreated, can lead to cancer. And everyone knows what cancer may lead to, if you don't catch it in time. I'm terrified.

Bad decisions, left untreated, are a cancer in your life. They're like snowballs careening down the mountain — the closer you get to the bottom, the bigger and more destructive they get.

We're all going to make bad decisions. The trick to being successful in life is to handle them well and to learn from them so that the balance of decisions you make lean toward the good.

For example, I'm using my diagnosis as a prompt to learn more about good nutrition, organic foods and weight loss. I may feel awful right now, but I don't always have to feel that way. I can change what I eat and change how I feel.

You can change things in your life, too.

Experience, people say, is one of the best teachers out there. Use your experience with your bad decisions to make good ones in the future.

Maybe you made a bad decision that hurt a friend. Apologizing can strengthen and mend your relationship with that person. Maybe you succumbed to peer pressure and did something you didn't really want to do. Use that experience to ditch the people who bring you down and invest your time and love into healthier things.

Finally, forgive yourself and forgive others. Everyone screws up eventually. Don't kick yourself too hard for the bad decisions that have already happened. Use your knowledge and experience to avoid making them in the future.

The next time you make a bad decision, don't let it run and ruin your life. Turn it around, learn from it and turn the sad memories into better ones.

As for me, I went cold turkey off coffee and curry and already feel so much better. And you will, too.

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