

Regret, Remorse, & Resistance

Could you have taken a different path? Of course, but that would still be true had you taken a different path.

No matter what you choose to do, it's possible to get stuck in the trap of believing you would have been much happier, healthier, and richer if you had taken the other path.

We usually work very hard to avoid regret before making big decisions. "I could do this really practical thing over here, but I'll regret it forever if I don't try that really artistic thing over there."

The real work, however, begins after you've ran all those calculations. The real work begins when you've made it halfway down the path that wears your name and you hear a voice that says "Would I have been better off had I just stayed in my comfort zone?"

When (not if) you have those moments, here's a distinction you may find useful: remorse versus resistance.

Remorse is when you know you've done something that contradicts your principles and you feel genuine moral conviction about it. It's the sound of your conscience calling you back home.

Resistance is when you find yourself lost in unfalsifiable speculation about how much happier you could be in some theoretical world where challenges, uncertainties, and risks don't exist. It's the sound of your lizard brain calling you back to your comfort zone.

Remorse sounds like "I know that I don't like this. Therefore, I need to change something about my life."

Resistance sounds like "I don't know how this is going to turn out. Therefore, I was probably better off doing that other thing."

Remorse appeals to your conscience. It says "I'm not in agreement with myself about how I'm living."

Resistance appeals to your convenience. It says "it's probably better to not rock the boat."

Remorse is about how much better your life will be if you look in the mirror, face the truth, and make things right.

Resistance is about how much better your life will be if you sit down, shut up, and stay in your place.

Your sense of remorse is there to keep you grounded. The voice of resistance is there to hold you back.

When it comes to your dreams, stay grounded but don't hold back.

There's always another path. Happiness, however, doesn't come from hypothetical scenarios about other paths. It comes from honoring your principles, taking one step at a time, and realizing that the best path is the one you create by following your convictions past the point of your resistance.

At least that's the way I see it.