



## Regret



It's still there.

**Howard Cutler:** "Have there been situations in your life that you've regretted?"

**Dalai Lama:** "Oh, yes. Now for instance there was one older monk who lived as a hermit. He used to come to see me to receive teachings, although I think he was actually more



accomplished than I and came to me as a sort of formality. Anyway, he came to me one day and asked me about doing a certain high-level esoteric practice. I remarked in a casual way that this would be a difficult practice and perhaps would be better undertaken by someone who was younger, that traditionally it was a practice that should be started in one's midteens. I later found out that the monk had killed himself in order to be reborn in a younger body to more effectively undertake the practice..."

Surprised by this story, I remarked, "Oh, that's terrible! That must have been hard on you when you heard..." The Dalai Lama nodded sadly. "How did you deal with that feeling of regret? How did you eventually get rid of it?"

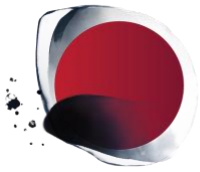
The Dalai Lama silently considered for quite a while before replying, "I didn't get rid of it. It's still there. But even though that feeling of regret is still there, it isn't associated with a feeling of heaviness or a quality of pulling me back. It would not be helpful to anyone if I let that feeling of regret weigh me down, be simply a source of discouragement and depression with no purpose or interfere with going on with my life to the best of my ability."

At that moment, in a very visceral way, I was struck once again by the very real possibility of a human being's fully facing life's tragedies and responding emotionally, even with deep regret, but without indulging in excessive guilt or self-contempt. The possibility of a human being's wholly accepting herself or himself, complete with limitations, foibles, and lapses of judgment. The possibility of recognizing a bad situation for what it is and responding emotionally, but without overresponding. The Dalai Lama sincerely felt regret over the incident he described but carried his regret with dignity and grace. And while carrying this regret, he has not allowed it to weigh him down, choosing instead to move ahead and focus on helping others to the best of his ability."

## Reference

— from *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, M.D.*

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