

- a. You are going to read an article about regrets. Which three areas of life do you think people tend to have the most regrets about? Choose from the list below.

career education family health love money travel

- b. Read the article once and check. How did the writer change someone's life?

# Regrets

Recently, I helped my son move into his first-year room at university in Chicago and we discussed his hopes and plans for the next three years. That evening, I found myself thinking about how to help him make decisions he would never regret. I went to Twitter and typed, "What is your biggest regret?" The response was huge and devastatingly honest. I had asked a question that, surprisingly, a lot of people really wanted to answer.

I loved the light-hearted responses...

"Not flying on Concorde to New York with Lionel Richie. He wanted to take me for dinner. I was working. #idiot"

But very few of them were like that. What emerged is that real regrets are not about bad things happening to you. They are about bad choices – a deep sorrow, or anger at yourself for something you did, or something you failed to do.

Most of the replies divided into different categories. Education was high up the list – there were many more regrets to do with school and college than I had expected.

"Never going to university. Left me disadvantaged all my life. Never lived up to my potential."

1

2

Career-choice regrets made me realize a pattern was developing: regret seems most often to be about fear. Fear of doing the wrong thing, which then leads to an unfulfilled life.

"Not following my dream to work in radio."

3

4

And then, perhaps less surprising, there was love: a few tweets from people regretting that they had declared their love and ended up having their heart broken, but many, many more regretting not being brave – regretting having been afraid. There's definitely a lesson in there: while there's always the possibility of rejection, it's better than the regret of not having tried.

"Not telling someone I loved them. 20 years too late now."

5

It was encouraging that right alongside the people who regretted a life lived in fear were others who had made a change who were now regretting the time it had taken to find their solution.

"Worrying too much about what other people thought of me."

6

Intelligently, of all the replies, only two people mentioned money – one regretting a flat they hadn't bought, one regretting a sale.

## Regret seems most often to be about fear.

My favourite of all the replies was from @dorey1414. She tweeted me this:

"I'm 54, no friends, or family, only 18 Twitter followers, but I have everything I need. Biggest regret – not listening at school."

At last, here was one tiny area where I could be useful! I retweeted her words and asked Twitter if they could help. Ten minutes later, her follower count had gone up to 24. By the morning, it was 360. She now has more than 900 and is massively excited about it, starting enthusiastic conversations with dozens of her new followers. Having left school before her exams and worked for 38 years in a job she doesn't enjoy, she now has a chance to change her life.


Before I flew home from Chicago, I texted my son with this advice: "Take risks – they may go wrong but it's better than regretting not having tried. And ring your mother."

Read the article again. Complete 1–6 with tweets A–F. What kinds of words are left out in some of the tweets?


A	'Being scared all the time. Moved to France – still scary but food and life is good!'
B	'Listening to my dad when he said my voice was too weak to be a singer.'
C	'Marrying the first person who asked, because I thought no one would ever ask me.'
D	'My regret: listening to teachers who said I was stupid because I can't spell. After two degrees was told I'm dyslexic. Am currently on fourth degree.'
E	'Not getting a better education and working full-time from the age of 16.'
F	'Not taking the job in Paris.'

## 5 PRONUNCIATION & SPEAKING

### sentence rhythm and intonation

- a  **5.22** Listen and write down six more regrets with *wish*.
- b Match regrets 1–6 from a with the sentences below.
- ☐ A Do you want me to phone and make an excuse?
  - ☐ B Yes, watching it on TV is never as exciting.
  - ☐ C Well, it isn't too late. You're only 22.
  - ☐ D Yes, you should have had more self-control!
  - ☐ E Why don't you go back to the shop and see if they still have them?
  - ☐ F Yes, it was a bit tactless. I hope she's not too upset.

## 6 LISTENING & WRITING

- a  5.24 Listen to a poem about regret from a poetry website. What's the first line of each verse?
- b Listen again, and for each verse, write down as many words as you can.
- c Work with a partner. Compare the words you've written, and together, try to reconstruct the poem.
- d Listen one more time and check your version.
- e Together, write your own poem of at least three verses. Start each verse with *I wish I had / hadn't...*
- f Read your poems aloud. Have a class vote for the best one.

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**c Complete the sentences with an adjective from b.**

- 1 He was offended when the teacher suggested he might have cheated in the exam.
- 2 We were  when we received a surprise visit from some old friends.
- 3 She gave such an  performance in the film that I think she might win an Oscar.
- 4 I'm  with your English. You speak really well.
- 5 The bridge started to move from side to side as we were crossing, which was quite .
- 6 She's a bit  at the moment because she's looking after her sister's children as well as her own.
- 7 I found his sexist comments very .
- 8 Joe's  of small spaces – he never uses the lift.
- 9 My nieces are  – they're very sweet, and they're always making things for me.
- 10 My boss is good at staying calm in  situations.

**VOCABULARY FROM READING**

Complete the sentences with the correct word from a pair in the list.

afraid / fear   angry / anger   brave / bravery  
encouraging / encouragement  
enthusiastic / enthusiasm   excited / excitement  
honest / honesty   sorry / sorrow





- 1 My nephew's very *excited* about his birthday tomorrow.
- 2 I wish my boyfriend was more  – I've caught him telling lies recently.
- 3 She raised her voice in  when she saw the children behaving so badly.
- 4 I'm not very  about the party – I don't really want to go.
- 5 I wish I had written to my uncle to express my  about the death of my aunt.
- 6 My art teacher is very  about my work – she thinks I'm pretty good.
- 7 The soldier received a medal for his  – he had risked his life to protect his regiment.
- 8 The child was shaking with  after being chased by a big dog.

## 4 **GRAMMAR** *wish* for past regrets

- a Match 1–8 to a–h. Then complete a–h with the past perfect form of a verb from the list. Use contractions.

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bring   leave   not eat   not fall   not shout  
not spend   study   wear

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- 1 I'm going to be late.
- 2 It's colder than I thought today.
- 3 I feel sick.
- 4 I failed half of my exams.
- 5 My leg hurts.
- 6 I've upset my little sister.
- 7 It's pouring with rain.
- 8 I don't have a lot of money left.

      e

- a I wish I  an umbrella.
- b I wish I  so much on that meal last night.
- c I wish I  harder.
- d I wish I  at her this morning.
- e I wish I'd left  home earlier.
- f I wish I  off my bike.
- g I wish I  a thicker sweater.

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**b** Read the situation and write sentences beginning with *I wish* + past perfect.

- 1 I took the train to work, but it broke down and I was late.

*I wish I hadn't taken the train to work.*

- 2 I left my mobile on my desk, and now it isn't there.

- 3 I didn't give my boss the report on time, and now he's annoyed with me.

- 4 My boyfriend didn't call me last night, and now I'm worried.

- 5 My friend didn't invite me to her wedding, and now I'm upset.

- 6 We lost our last basketball match, so we won't be playing in the final.

- 7 I was rude to my mother, and now she's offended.

- 8 My son woke me up in the middle of the night, and I couldn't get back to sleep again.

## PRONUNCIATION sentence rhythm and intonation

### 5.2 Listen and complete the sentences.

- 1 I wish I'd *applied* \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 I wish you'd \_\_\_\_\_ at the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 I wish I \_\_\_\_\_ these \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 I wish we'd \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 I wish you \_\_\_\_\_ me \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 I wish we \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_.