

46. Rethinking Our Regrets with Dr. Michael Hersh



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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Arpita: Hi everybody. And welcome to another episode of doctors living deliberately. We have holidays coming up in a couple of days. I think there's been a lot of hustle and bustle going around for a lot of different people trying to do all the things. So we hear ya, we feel ya.. And this is just your moment of Zen peace, I would say, where you get to go and hide or maybe go for a walk or drive to the office and just listen to our beautiful voices. Right. Right. Michael Hersh. What do you think?

Michael: I don't know. My voice isn't feeling so beautiful today. It's, it's that time of year where the kids bring everything home. And so my voice is not its usual majestic quality. So we'll, we'll just have to make do. We'll get what we get today.

Arpita: That low, sexy, rumbly voice today we get. So yes. Well, awesome. Well, today we decided we were going to talk about something that we think is probably going to be coming up for people, especially this time of year and you know, the new year coming up pretty soon. And that's honestly how we might be having regrets, you know, and when regrets hit us in a way where we start to question how we showed up and kind of maybe blame ourselves for not showing up perfectly. So Dr. Hersh has decided to enlighten us on his, you know his perspective and maybe give us some tips and tools today on how we can maybe rethink our regrets that we've created for ourselves. So Without further ado. Dr. Michael Hersh. Take it away

Michael: Well, you know, I think this is just a really important topic because as we get to the end of the year and everybody's thinking about their New Year's resolutions, a lot of times people take a moment to look back at the year gone by and regret decisions. I know on social media sometimes I see doctors kind of getting down on kind of the stuff that's going on in health care right now, regretting going to medical school, doing their medical training, and I think this is something regret comes up a lot when we are coaching physicians. And so what better time of year than as people are kind of starting to put away this current year and look forward to the next year than to address some of the thoughts. And one kind of saying or motto that comes up a lot in coaching when we were talking about regrets is you made the best decision you could with the information you had at the time. And whenever I look back and I wish I had done that or oh I should have known better, I try to remind myself that You know, the decision I made was because of the information I had at that point in time. And certainly now I can look back and have wisdom that I didn't have, but I've already made that decision. And I am the person I am today because of the decision that I made.

And so regret can be a very common component of life, right? It's so easy to look back and, and, you know, be Monday morning quarterback where you're like, Oh, I should have done this after you already know how things are going to turn out, right? It's a lot easier to look back than it is to predict how things are going to go. And so remembering that, again, you are the person you are today, regrets and all because of the decisions that you made. And if you had made different decisions, you would be a different person today. And guess what? You just have different regrets. And so it's really fascinating how this comes up and when you are coaching physicians or just in your life in general, Arpita, does this come up for you when you're talking to people?

Arpita: \ I think it would be, safe to say that I don't think there is a person on earth that it doesn't come up for like where we have regrets. It's actually funny. I'm reading a book right now. One of my clients told me about a book, it's called the midnight library. I highly recommend it. It's about this girl who's actually about to end her life because she feels like she has nothing to live for. And she's able to go into this library and this, I guess zone that between consciousness and unconsciousness, where she gets to pick the choose your own adventure. The library is books of had she done it a different way, what her life would look like. And it's a really great book because it gives the perspective of how we think things might have been, had we done something

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differently. And even then there's no guarantee that it would have been great or good or even better than what we have. Right? We just have this perception of that.

I think what I find a lot of times, you know, with a lot of the mommies and the guilt is, you know, blaming ourselves for how we showed up or blaming ourselves for how we did something that we wish we had done differently. How things could have been differently. And when we do this, we kind of are stuck in this cycle. We're unable to really move forward towards what we want. It really prevents us from being able to be present in the current moment. And that's kind of, it's kind of funny because you think about this, you have the regret, you're not able to be present where you are because you're so busy thinking about how you could have been, how it could have been had you shown up differently. And then you're missing out on the present moment and then you start to regret that as well. Right? And so it becomes a vicious cycle of constant regret. So, you know, I want to really encourage people to just catch themselves when you find yourself regretting, can you shift it in a way where you're actually able to say, you know what? Everything worked out the way it was supposed to, everything is happening exactly how it's supposed to be. And I'm going to embrace this moment for what it is now and be present in what I have. And that's really how we live a truly enriched life in my opinion. There's a quote from Matteo. I'm going to read this to you because I can never remember on word for word, but it says, "Don't believe that what you had planned for in the future will be any better than the present moment." Right? And so that goes back to that book too. It's a very powerful book, the Midnight Library. So I would highly recommend it. Yeah. So tell, what are your thoughts on that? How do you start to make a shift when you catch yourself?

Michael: I, you know, I think it all comes down to, you know, you and I have talked a lot about being curious and nonjudgmental with yourself. And so really being curious about why are you regretting this decision that you made? What are you making this decision mean about your current life? And I think a lot of people, I'm going to go out on a limb and assume that a lot of people, they regret because they think that this was this unchangeable fork in the road. And once they've chosen that path, they can never go back and And get the thing that they now wish they had. And I think it's so important when you're being curious with yourself to ask yourself the even more important question of, is that even true? So, just the other day I was engaging on social media and I was talking about how being a physician opens doors for people, right? And the implication there is that we have so many skills and tools that we can bring to all these other aspects of our life. And somebody commented and said, well, you know, I'm not taken seriously in the industry that I want to be in because I'm just a doctor. And so I've decided to go back to school. And in my mind, I was like, that's great, right? You have chosen to go back to school. And who knows, maybe it was easier for you to make that decision because of the experiences that you've had as a physician, or maybe you get into a different or a better school because of your pedigree that you have going into the education. And I think, you know, the implication here was there are a lot of doctors that regret their medical training. Because they think that it's pigeonholed them in a way that other industries won't take them seriously. But I want to ask you this, right? If you if you were interacting with a pre med student, somebody who was in college and studying to be a doctor, who claimed to be a doctor before they had even gone through the training, you probably wouldn't take them seriously either. But that person then has the opportunity to go through the training and become the thing that they want to be. And the same is true for doctors. Right? So medical education is nothing to regret. Again, you are who you are today because of all of these experiences that you've been through. And so, using that, you can take that into, you know, a pivot in your current career or a new career altogether. Being a doctor didn't close the door, it actually just showed you, well, yes, I did this, but now I really want to do this. And so, of course, there may be more schooling or more training or things along those lines, but you don't have to regret the previous decisions that you made. It's not going to hold you back from doing the next thing unless you let it.

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Arpita: Right. And I think that, I mean, you're speaking to physicians who may no longer feel that this is the career path they want to have. And I get that. I think part of it is also realizing that you know, for me, I struggled a lot with the fact when I shifted away from practicing medicine, I had tied my identity to being a doctor. And so there was a lot of pride and a lot of just time and investment into doing that for myself. But that pride was super important for me, such that when I chose to shift careers and do other things with managing the practice and becoming a life coach and, and all the things. I was a little bit nervous about, Hey, what am I doing? You know, I, I didn't necessarily have the regret that I wasn't practicing anymore, but I had the fear of what other people were going to think because that, that area of my career was so much more in my mind, valuable than what I was doing now.

So the reason I'm talking about this is I want you to also pay attention to if you define yourself by your past, right? If you do that, your future results are going to stay the same. If you define yourself by, I am a doctor so therefore, if I'm doctoring, that's the only thing that proves my worth or my value, no matter what you do moving forward, you're not going to have that same level of contentment, right? So how do you get to a point where your identity is not predefined, right? And I did this when I shifted careers, I remember with the life coach, I still said to people, I'm a pediatrician or I'm a physician and now I do mindset coaching for women physicians, right? I have slowly shifted. I mean, I will say in certain scenarios, I will still throw out the physician part, but being able to explain who you are without that identity is important there. Right.

So another area where I feel like this, you know, shows up almost sneakily for us when we have the regrets is when we have these little thoughts that fly through our brain. And with specifically with regards to how we show up now, you know, when you have thoughts like, I've never been able to do this. Or I can't do this. Or X, Y, and Z has never worked for me. I'm not good at. All of these type of thoughts that we have, when it's linked or related to something we've done or how we showed up in the past really keeps us from being able to move forward in the current time towards what we want to do next. Right? So when we want to create something new for ourselves, when we want to move forward with a new career or a new path with our education, we have to be deliberate about how we're choosing to think about that. Right? So instead of I don't know, I've never been able to do this. I'm learning to do this. I'm working on doing X, Y, and Z, right? I am practicing this. I'm developing the skill set of this. You have to put your brain back in the driver's seat for how you want to choose to think about your future, how you're moving forward when you've decided that what you did in the past is no longer what you want to continue with, right? So I think that's really been very important for me just to be on to myself when I stay stuck in the regret and getting thoughts and getting that cycle where I can't move forward because I'm just dwelling in that right?

Michael: Right. And I think addressing some questions when you, when you are experiencing the regret, you know, you and I have again in in previous episodes talked a little bit about how the mind is always going to shift towards the negative, right? It's so human nature to automatically just start thinking about what's wrong. And when you are looking back at a decision with regret, think about what are the gifts that that decision has brought to your life. What have you gained from having done that? And it might be smaller things like, you know, I don't know where, where you live, or, or it could be bigger things like who your friends in your community are, the knowledge that you have, a path that you have gone down things along those lines. And then like, what would have happened if you had made a different decision with that. Right? When things have come up the same way would there have been something that you would have lost for not having made this decision? And I think the key here is, like, even when you said before, maybe it was always supposed to be that way. Sometimes that feels a little Pollyanna to me. It feels a little like toxic positivity y. But I, I think it's about recognizing what are the gifts, what have I gained from having done this? And can I accept the fact that

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this was the decision that I made and that at this very moment in time, I can choose to be whoever I want to be. And so going after that with intention, deciding right now, this is who and what I want to be, it's almost a gift to your future self. Right? This is a little meta. Right. So if you can today in the right here and now decide this is who and what I want to be and then do all the things that you need to do to bring that to fruition, then guess what? Future you gets to look back at you right now at this point in your life and thank you rather than regret the decisions that you're making.

Arpita: Totally. I, I am a firm believer that whatever happens is supposed to happen. And like, you kind of touched upon and what I've found is that just because we think, had we done something differently, things would be so much better. There's no guarantee. There is no guarantee that had you done something differently in your past, that you would be in a different space that would actually be more closer to what you were anticipating now. So instead of constantly being in that push pull battle, and just not being settled in a peaceful space, how can you settle in the space that you're in and decide from there where you want to go next? Right? That's where we want to focus. That's where we want to really put our energies instead of expending it uselessly in our regrets.

Michael: And, and, you know, regret is another example of an indulgent emotion. We've talked about these emotions that don't move us forward. They don't get us what we want in life. They just cause us to spin. And regret is another example of an indulgent emotion. So rather than sitting and wasting energy and spinning, What can you do to make your life what you want? Right? And, and there's so much power there, and I, and I love how you can shift yourself from this very disempowering sensation of regret, and then just right here and now decide it's just not going to be this way anymore, because next year, five years from now, ten years from now, I'm going to be doing this. And I get to make that decision right now.

Arpita: I think this has been a lovely, lovely episode for us all to reflect on as we end this year, 2023. I had to think about that for a minute. But yeah, I challenge you all to look at maybe where you found yourself regretting your behaviors or your actions or things that happened this past year. And instead of that, instead of the regret there, I want you to focus on what is actually a gift that has been born because of the way you made that decision, or the way you chose to go. What is the gift? How can you shift your mindset to seeing the positive in that, the gift in that, that you may not have recognized back then? And this is super powerful, because a lot of times, as I've said, when you're in your shit, you can't see through it, and you can't see the gift right then, but it comes to us later. Michael Hersh, any final words?

Michael: No, I mean, I think we've really covered it. I think it's really just all about, again, looking at regret with curiosity, no judgment, and then making decisions about what do you want your future to look like? Because the truth is, no door is closed until we're not here anymore, right? And so use every day to actively, intentionally, deliberately decide what your life wants to look like. And you know, I just want to take a moment to wish everybody a wonderful holiday. And it's been so amazing getting a chance to chat with you all this year, but we're not done yet, right? We still have another episode to go in 2023.

Arpita: Yes, we do. We sure do.

Michael: Awesome. Another fantastic episode. Thank you all so much for joining us. And we look forward to seeing you next time on Doctors Living Deliberately. Take care.

Arpita: Bye.