



As we approach the end of the semester, some perspective may help. **What you do over these next few days matters.** It's so easy to have an "I'll just do better (fill in the blank) after I (fill in the blank). Or the easy way out fallback, "Really who cares about (fill in the blank)?" **Inaction/disengagement is a trap and a really hard one to break free of.** Our lives are a series of today's. You create your success through the decisions (big and small) you make and the actions you take on a day-to-day vs. the wishes for different tomorrow that occupy your headspace. Not sure? Consider this excerpt of [a Jeff Haden article](#) (with examples tweaked for SPCPA students).

Research shows that more people regret things they didn't do than the things they did, even if things they did turned out badly. A new study takes that idea even further, probing the kinds of regrets we have about the people we don't *become*, a natural extension of the actions we didn't *take*.

Researchers focused on three things:

- Our **actual** selves: The traits and abilities we think we possess; basically, who we think we are.
- Our **ought** selves: The traits and abilities we think we *should* possess; basically, who we think we should be (think responsibilities and obligations).
- Our **ideal** selves: The traits, abilities, and accomplishments we would like to possess; basically, our goals and hopes and dreams.

It makes sense that we regret not doing the things we think we are supposed to do, but research shows most people (72 percent) feel regret related to their ideal self as opposed to their ought self (28 percent). In fact, when asked to name their single biggest life regret, 76 percent of participants cite an action not taken that would have helped them realize their ideal self. In short, we most regret thinking we didn't reach our full potential. **We most regret not becoming the person we feel we could have become...if we only had tried.** That is one mistake you can never go back and fix. The good news? It is also the one mistake you can stop making--*today*.

1. Always make your goal tangible and specific.

Say you want to get better grades. Sounds great, but what does it mean? Nothing. It's just a wish. "Go from a B- to a B in (name class) by turning in (fill in the blank) missing assignments/retaking (fill in the blank) test" is a specific, measurable, objective goal and plan. Follow it!

2. Always make your goal matter.

If you want to get in better grades just so you will have more college options, you're unlikely to follow through. Why? There's no way to know if a B+ vs a B really made a difference. But, if you look at grades as an expression of your work ethic, your commitment to your future whether it includes college immediately after high school or not...then you're much more likely to stick with your goal. It means something to *you*.

3. Always make your goal a positive goal.

"Stop procrastinating" sounds like a great goal, but it's a negative goal. It's a lot harder to give up or stop doing something than it is to embrace a new and positive changes. Always pick positive goals--that way you'll be working to *become* something new (and awesome), rather than to *avoid* being something you no longer wish to be.

4. Always set your goal, and then *forget* your goal.

One of the biggest reasons people give up on huge goals is the distance between *here*, where you are today, and *there*, where you someday hope to be. The distance between here and there can seem insurmountable, so giving up, seems easier than doing. Fortunately, as artists, you know that it's the process that matters. Rehearse. Re-evaluate. Repeat better, smarter, and closer to where you want to be. Focus on "**What do I need to do today?**" Do it and, rightly, feel good about another accomplishment that moves you forward. Positive thoughts beget positive energy. The first accomplishment makes the next one even easier. Success is the best motivation of all.

5. Always focus on the daily process.

The key to long-term success is to create a process that guarantees a series of small improvements. Usually that means that what you do won't be that different from what other successful people do. Learn what works best for you – not what you *want* to do, or what *feels* good, or what you *think* might work – but what is *proven* to work and **do it!**



College perspective regarding high school priorities...

...the order is revealing. Colleges are keenly aware that students are experiencing many uncertainties and challenges. Representatives from [370 institutions](#) issued this joint statement to **clarify what they value in applicants**. *On the surface, this message seems directed primarily at current seniors and juniors. The reality is that the pandemic has prompted these schools to share a clearer sense of what matters to them. Covid-19 will eventually recede into the background, but what will not change is colleges' desire to better understand you and how your experiences have impacted your choices/decisions.* **We encourage students to communicate any factors specific to their circumstances that impeded their academic performance.** Those factors might include, for example, lack of access to the internet, no quiet place to study, or the various family responsibilities described above. We encourage students to **describe concretely how any of these circumstances have negatively affected their academic performance or ability to engage in activities that matter to them.** *Keep track of how you spend your time now and in the future. The details of your journey matter.* **We primarily wish to underscore our commitment to equity and to encourage students' self-care, balance, meaningful learning, and care for others.**

- 1. Self-care.** Self-care is of high importance, especially in times of crisis. We recognize that many students, economically struggling and facing losses and hardships of countless kinds, are simply seeking to get by. We also recognize that this time is stressful and demanding for a wide range of students for many different reasons. **We encourage all students to be gentle with themselves during this time.**
- 2. Academic work.** Your academic engagement and work during this time matters to us, but given the circumstances of many families, we recognize that you may face obstacles to academic work. We will assess your academic achievements in the context of these obstacles. In addition, **we will assess your academic achievements mainly based on your academic performance before and after this pandemic.** No student will be disadvantaged because of a change in commitments or a change in plans because of this outbreak, their school's decisions about transcripts, the absence of AP or IB tests, their lack of access to standardized tests, or their inability to visit campus. We will also view students in the context of the curriculum, academic resources, and supports available to them.
- 3. Service and contributions to others.** We value contributions to one's communities for those who are in a position to provide these contributions. We recognize that while many students are not in this position because of stresses and demands, other students are looking for opportunities to be engaged and make a difference. This pandemic has created a huge array of needs, whether for tutoring, contact tracing, support for senior citizens, or assistance with food delivery. We view responding to these needs as one valuable way that students can spend their time during this pandemic. We also value forms of contribution that are unrelated to this pandemic, such as working to register voters, protect the environment, combat racial injustice and inequities, or stop online harassment among peers. Our interest is not in whether students created a new project or demonstrated leadership during this period. We, emphatically, do not seek to create a competitive public service "Olympics" in response to this pandemic. **What matters to us is whether students' contribution or service is authentic and meaningful to them and to others,** whether that contribution is writing regular notes to frontline workers or checking in with neighbors who are isolated. We will assess these contributions and service in the context of the obstacles students are facing. We also care about what students have learned from their contributions to others about themselves, their communities, and/or their country. **No student will be disadvantaged during this time who is not in a position to provide these contributions.** We will review these students for admissions in terms of other aspects of their applications.
- 4. Family contributions.** Far too often there is a misperception that high-profile, brief forms of service tend to "count" in admissions while family contributions—which are often deeper and more time-consuming and demanding—do not. Many students may be supervising younger siblings, for example, or caring for sick relatives or working to provide family income, and we recognize that these responsibilities may have increased during these times. **We view substantial family contributions as very important, and we encourage students to report them in their applications.** It will only positively impact the review of their application during this time.
- 5. Extracurricular and summer activities.** No student will be disadvantaged for not engaging in extracurricular activities. We also understand that many plans for summer have been impacted by this pandemic, and students will not be disadvantaged for lost possibilities for involvement. Potential internship opportunities, summer jobs, camp experiences, classes, and other types of meaningful engagement have been cancelled or altered. **We have never had specific expectations for any one type of extracurricular activity or summer experience and realize that each student's circumstances allow for different opportunities.** We have always considered work or family responsibilities as valuable ways of spending one's time, and this is especially true at this time.