

Reset - Don't Regret

A practical coaching guide for recovering from a choice, reaction or difficult moment without getting trapped in shame. Reflect, repair what you can, learn what matters and move forward.

A reset is not pretending it did not happen

Everyone has moments they wish had gone differently. You may have reacted under pressure, said yes when you meant no, returned to an old coping strategy, missed something important, lost your temper, avoided a conversation or made a decision you now question. Regret can contain useful information, but when it turns into relentless self-attack it stops helping.

Resetting means facing what happened honestly while refusing to make one moment your whole identity. The question changes from *How could I have done that?* to *What happened, what is mine to take responsibility for, and what will support a different next step?*

RESET: a five-part process

- **Recognise:** describe what happened as accurately as you can, without exaggerating or minimising it.
- **Examine:** what was happening beforehand - stress, alcohol, overload, fear, tiredness, rejection, conflict, impulsivity or unmet needs?
- **Settle:** regulate enough to think rather than reacting to the regret itself.
- **Evaluate:** what needs repair, support, a boundary, treatment or a practical change?
- **Try again:** choose one specific action that makes the next similar moment more manageable.

Regret, guilt and shame are not the same

Regret says, 'I wish that had gone differently.' **Guilt** can say, 'I acted against my values.' **Shame** often says, 'There is something fundamentally wrong with me.' Guilt can sometimes guide repair. Shame often makes people hide, defend, numb or give up. A useful reset separates the behaviour from the whole person.

Carl Rogers: acceptance and change

Person-centred work does not remove accountability. It creates enough psychological safety to look honestly at experience. Rogers' emphasis on acceptance is particularly relevant when regret has become self-rejection.

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change." - Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (1961).

Before you fix it, regulate

If your nervous system is highly activated, your thinking may become more rigid and catastrophic. Pause before sending repeated messages, making promises you cannot keep or deciding that everything is ruined. Eat or drink if needed, reduce sensory load, move, rest, talk to somebody safe and allow the intensity to come down.

Learn Without Punishing Yourself

Use curiosity instead of a courtroom

Reflection should help you understand patterns. Interrogating yourself for hours rarely creates better behaviour. Ask concrete questions: What was the trigger? What did I notice in my body? What was I trying to get away from or obtain? What choice point did I miss? What would have helped five minutes earlier?

When the regret involves another person

- **Own what is yours:** be specific rather than vague or defensive.
- **Listen:** the other person may need their experience acknowledged.
- **Apologise without demanding forgiveness:** an apology is not a way to make the other person remove your discomfort.
- **Repair where possible:** replace, repay, correct, clarify or change a repeated behaviour.
- **Respect boundaries:** sometimes the other person needs space.
- **Demonstrate learning:** repeated action matters more than repeated promises.

A simple repair script

"I have thought about what happened. I can see that I _____. I understand that this may have affected you by _____. I am sorry. I am working on _____ so that I respond differently next time. I understand if you need time or space."

When alcohol or another coping behaviour is part of the regret

Regret after drinking, substance use, spending, gambling-like behaviour, bingeing, restriction, self-isolation or other fast-relief coping can create a cycle: distress → coping behaviour → short relief → regret/shame → more distress. The reset needs to address the function of the behaviour, not only promise that it will never happen again.

Ask what the behaviour was doing for you: numbing, confidence, sleep, escape, stimulation, connection, control or relief. Then build alternatives and seek specialist help where needed. If you drink heavily or regularly, stopping alcohol suddenly can be medically dangerous for some people; seek medical or specialist alcohol advice rather than attempting abrupt withdrawal.

Neurodivergence and regret

ADHD impulsivity, emotional intensity, working-memory difficulties and time blindness can contribute to choices made quickly or tasks missed unintentionally. Autistic overload, shutdown, literal communication, masking and delayed processing can also affect interactions. Understanding these factors is not an excuse; it helps make prevention practical.

Useful neurodivergent resets

- Build delay into decisions: 'I will come back to you' rather than answering immediately.
- Use written reminders and external systems instead of relying on memory.
- Plan decompression before difficult conversations or social demands.
- Agree on communication repair strategies with trusted people.
- Reduce sensory load before trying to resolve conflict.
- Identify rejection sensitivity or shame spirals before they turn one mistake into a global judgement.

Reset after a difficult day

Do not make a difficult day prove that the whole week has failed. Return to the next helpful action: water, food, medication as prescribed, sleep routine, one repaired message, one boundary, one appointment, one tidy surface or one honest conversation. Recovery is often built through ordinary resets.

Your Reset Toolkit

The reset worksheet

PROMPT	YOUR NOTES
What happened - facts only?	_____
What was happening beforehand?	_____
What was I feeling / needing?	_____
What part is mine to own?	_____
Is repair needed?	_____
What would help next time?	_____
My next helpful action	_____

The 24-hour reset plan

- **Now:** stop adding damage. Do not send reactive messages or make dramatic promises.
- **Within a few hours:** meet basic needs and write down the facts while they are clear.
- **When settled:** decide whether an apology, correction, boundary or professional conversation is needed.
- **Before tomorrow ends:** put one prevention strategy in place.
- **Later:** review whether the change worked; adjust rather than abandoning the plan.

What can I control?

I can control: my next action, whether I apologise, the support I seek, my boundaries, preparation and what I learn.

I cannot control: another person's immediate reaction, the past, whether everybody understands me, or whether consequences disappear.

Weekly reflection

- What did I recover from rather than give up on?
- Which trigger or pattern became clearer?
- Where did I take responsibility without attacking myself?
- What repair am I proud I attempted?
- What support would reduce the chance of repetition?
- Where am I expecting perfection instead of progress?
- What do I want to practise next week?

When regret needs professional support

Seek additional help if regret is tied to persistent depression, trauma, compulsive behaviour, substance use, repeated relationship harm, severe anxiety, self-harm or suicidal thoughts. If you are in immediate danger in the UK, call 999 or attend A&E.; NHS 111 and local urgent mental-health services can direct you to urgent support.

A Message From Maggie, Books & Resources

A message from Maggie

A reset is something I want people to see as permission to begin again - not permission to ignore what happened. There is a huge difference. We can take responsibility and still treat ourselves like human beings.

Sometimes regret teaches us that we crossed our own boundary, ignored our capacity, acted from fear or reached for something that gave quick relief. Sometimes we genuinely hurt somebody and need to repair it. Sometimes we are punishing ourselves for something that was never ours to carry in the first place. The pause helps us work out which is which.

You do not need to make a perfect promise about the rest of your life. Work with the next choice. Learn what happened before the difficult moment. Put support earlier in the chain. Apologise where it is yours. Make changes where they are needed. Then allow yourself to move forward.

One difficult moment does not erase every bit of progress that came before it. New beginnings can be very ordinary: the next hour, the next conversation, the next decision.

Recommended reading

Carl R. Rogers - *On Becoming a Person*. Person-centred foundations of acceptance, congruence and growth.

Kristin Neff - *Self-Compassion*. Helpful for understanding accountability without relentless self-criticism.

Russ Harris - *The Happiness Trap*. ACT-based strategies for responding to difficult thoughts and feelings while choosing values-led action.

William R. Miller & Stephen Rollnick - *Motivational Interviewing*. A professional text on compassionate conversations about change and ambivalence.

Further support

Depending on the situation, support may include your GP, a qualified counsellor or psychotherapist, NHS mental-health services, neurodivergent-affirming support, relationship counselling, domestic-abuse services, or specialist alcohol/substance services. Coaching can support reflection and practical change but does not replace clinical treatment where treatment is needed.

Clinical notes & references

Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On Becoming a Person*. • Neff, K. (2011). *Self-Compassion*. • Harris, R. (2019). *The Happiness Trap*, 2nd ed. • Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2023). *Motivational Interviewing*, 4th ed. • NICE guidance relevant to alcohol-use disorders, depression, anxiety and other presenting needs should be consulted alongside individual assessment.

Important: This is a coaching and psychoeducational resource. It does not diagnose a condition or replace medical, psychological, addiction or emergency care.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Maggie's Coaching