

# 10 Tips to Let Go of the Past

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The past will hold you back if you let it. Like dominoes toppling once set into motion, the past can bring you down, whether you're stuck on a past success or endlessly beating yourself up over colossal failure. Yet you have the power to stop this trajectory. Here are 10 tips to help.

## Tip #1: Everything isn't a big deal, so don't make it one.

It's amazing how few of us actually pay attention to this point. We tend to lump all our ills together and try to carry them forward despite the fact that the burden is just too much. Stop thinking that everything is a big deal. It really isn't.

Many of the past's unpleasant memories are more in your head than anyone else's. Those bad things you did? You cannot undo them. That resounding success that's caused you to stall? It's far more productive to take stock of the good and take action on something new today.

Also, piling things up in your head means you can't fully concentrate on what should be done now. Stuck in the past, you can't see what's here. Don't miss opportunities by looking backward. Instead, take stock of what is happening now.

Granted, trying to lighten the load and let go of the past will take some time. It's also not always easy to do. Still, by adopting the mindset that life is precious, short, and there's really no benefit to wasting it worrying about things that are over and done with can help you ditch that baggage and start moving forward.

## Tip #2: Now is the only reality.

Time for a reality check: The past isn't reality. It can't be, because it's in the past. While the consequences of past actions may continue, and you definitely need to take responsibility and atone for them where possible, the past is really behind you.

Here's another truth: You don't live in the past. You live in the present. Why give so much time and effort to worrying about what happened before? Changes you want



SUZANNE KANE

*Live a Vibrant, Purposeful Life*

[suzannekane.net](http://suzannekane.net)

to make you do in the present. Therefore, keep this in mind: The only reality is now. This shifts focus from the past and jump-starts forward movement. What happens tomorrow begins with today's actions. Embrace the opportunity of what is here and now.

### Tip #3: Don't waste energy trying to change the past.

As much as you'd like to erase some of your past actions, the fact is that no one can do that. It's impossible to change the past, to rewrite personal history and do away with what you said and did.

Thus, it's a waste of energy trying to change the past. It saps motivation and stalls forward momentum. Of course, since everyone has something in their past they'd like to have a do-over to change, rather than acknowledge what you did, telling yourself to forget trying to change the past is easier said than done.

Still, those bad memories are something you have to deal with, so while the past can't be changed, there is another option. Alter today's behavior and make the necessary changes so that you learn from your mistakes and do better from this day forward.

### Tip #4: Ask others for help.

No one person has all the answers. Faulty decision-making has resulted in a lot of painful mistakes. Having made the decision to move forward, to live life positively and proactively is a great first step. But how can you to get past the giant logjam of all the things you've done in the past? You've tried, but still can't seem to shake those incessant memories.

When you need help, ask for it. This simple truth is as valid for how to let go of the past and move forward as it is for anything else. Talk with a loved one, family member, a trusted friend, even a professional therapist. There's no shame in asking for help. It's actually a sign of the commitment you have to making responsible change.

## Tip #5: Celebrate what you accomplish today.

To get over being hung up on the past, find something in the present to celebrate. The easiest way to do this is to create small goals that are achievable in the short term. Then, diligently work toward completing them to the best of your ability.

Once you achieve a goal, acknowledge your success. It's important learn how to celebrate today's accomplishments. This places more emphasis on the present and results of your own actions than anything that happened in the past.

It's also worth noting that the achievement doesn't have to be anything big. The simplest, smallest tasks that you complete will do just fine. The more you accomplish, the better you'll feel about yourself and your ability to make progress. Feeling good about yourself is an excellent motivator to keep moving forward.

## Tip #6: Start fresh.

When it comes to overcoming the burdens of the past, a do-over sounds like a terrific idea. And, to be honest, a new perspective could be refreshing. For some, this may come about by making a fresh start. This isn't really as tough as it sounds.

Some people need to make a complete break from the past in order to start fresh. They move to a different city, state, or simply a different neighborhood. They quit an old job where they had a lot of "history" and take a new one in a related or unrelated field.

Giving up old acquaintances associated with past misdeeds is another path to a fresh start. It's one that many people put off as long as possible. It can be difficult to let go of what was comfortable, but keep in mind that those so-called friends were anything but when it came to your well-being. Trying to hang onto the past, and with friends you did bad things with then is to travel in very dangerous territory.

Make a fresh start, beginning today. Look for a new goal that offers challenge and motivation. Focus on self-improvement, take a class, find a new hobby or recreational activity or anything that will energize and expose you to healthier lifestyles and potential new friends.

## Tip #7: Build on what you know.

Each person has some strengths and talents. Why not use this ability to your advantage and look for healthier and more productive ways to express your creativity?

There are always several ways to approach making a decision. Use your creativity to build on what you know and do best. This will help you better strategize various solutions. With more than one potential solution to consider, it's easier to make an informed choice.

The good news about building upon what you know is that the more successful you are in doing so, the more self-confident you'll feel about your ability to make the right decisions going forward. Success builds upon success.

## Tip #8: Map out goals.

To have some sense of your future, look at where you want to be in six months, a year, five years, and 10 years from now. Make some short- and long-term goals. Then look at what kind of skills you need to get there. Will more training or a degree help? Put together a plan and work toward these goals each day. Don't worry that you can't see the finish line. Concentrate on working toward the short-term ones first, taking them one by one and doing the best you can.

As you work toward or complete a goal, other opportunities will present themselves. These may include new people that you meet that open doors for you to possibilities you never knew existed. Don't limit yourself or your options. Never allow someone else's criticism or negativity to influence or shape your life.

## Tip #9: Be optimistic and open to change.

Attitude is the key when looking toward the future. The more optimistic you are, the more likely you are to recognize opportunities and be open to change. Think of your spirit as a flowing river, an endless current of positive energy propelling you forward. It's hard to be stuck when you have such powerful momentum.

Likewise, maintain a generosity of spirit. When you give to others, you receive more than you can imagine. Do something for another with no expectation of anything in return. This will boost your self-confidence, self-worth, and replenish overall self-satisfaction. By giving, you also open yourself up to receive. Being optimistic and open to change will make it easier to let go of the past.

### Tip #10: Keep things in perspective.

What happened in the past can't hurt you. Of course, there are times when past behavior necessitates some serious reparations, such as jail time, making financial restitution, overcoming a tarnished reputation, learning how to deal with estrangement from loved ones and family members. The sooner you face and deal with the ramifications, the better your life will be.

Keep things in perspective. Where you were at the lowest point is not where you are today. You've gained strength and self-confidence along the way, as well as worked on restoring your self-esteem.

There are many ways to learn how to let go of the past and move forward. Life works and changes as you work it. In fact, every day is a new beginning, a fresh start along a path that you have the freedom to chart. The past has no business or staying power here in the present. Be alive. Be joyful. Be thankful for today and start moving forward.



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