

EDUCATION

Do you too regret your UNIVERSITY MAJOR?

Every now and then, I wonder about the exact moment I was whisked into my university major. I try to retrace my footsteps between now and high school, when I was tasked with making this decision, and thus, inevitably burdened by the weight of expectations, aspirations, and later, regret. It seems unfortunate that we should have to make such a consequential decision when we are very young and unaware of the kind of life we are signing up for.



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

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It is hardly a rare circumstance that only two or three years down the line, we realise that our chosen path is not what we expected it to be. We are left to push through and burn out the last of our willpower, or contemplate whether to reroute entirely. Then again, is such a misjudgment really worth beating ourselves up over?

When we had to choose, most of us did not have a ton of options. There is very little flexibility in universities to explore and determine what would actually be right for us. That is why the first step to making peace with this is not blaming yourself or anyone else whose foresight we may have relied on in the past.

The regret is all the more painful when we think of the ideal future we had imagined for ourselves, one that we hoped could be reached through a steady forward trajectory. It is for times

like this when we have to ask ourselves if this entitlement to our initial dreams is altogether healthy.

When we are young and inexperienced, a lot of our dreams are based on the best-case scenario, with a few blind spots due to youthful ignorance. With time, our views change and we learn things that no longer serve our ideal visions. If we refuse to let go of these ideals and readjust our plans, this rigidity will hinder our ability to evolve in difficult times. To say this is not to prime ourselves to endure a terrible major we have regrettably taken, but to take a realistic look at such a situation. When abandoning everything we've done so far is not an option, we could think about how we might be overlooking the merits of our current path.

While we ponder how to move past our academic mishaps, we might find some comfort in the fact that the current track does not necessarily have to be permanent. But how do we make

sure things change for the better? The new way forward may be yet another turbulent ride for us with a new set of obstacles and setbacks. While that definitely sounds bad for morale, it shouldn't discourage us from dabbling about a bit more in our academic journey. Surprisingly enough, statistics indicate that it could potentially be good for us down the line.

A paper published by economist Ofer Malamud described how research shows that students specialising in a chosen field later on in their lives, after a period of trial and error, tend to do better both financially and in terms of career success.

Hopefully, changing our approach to look at our early decisions as learning opportunities can help us see our missteps in a new light. Our academic journey may not look like what we had wished for due to multitudes of reasons beyond our control, but it could be an invitation for growth that launches us forward in unprecedented ways.



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