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***Skill 3: Distinguish  
Immediate Pain  
From Later  
Consequences***

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**Example.** Jonas has a brand new T-shirt that was pushed on him when he went to see *Les Mis* and lingered too long at the souvenirs, but his friend Rochelle—who he admits has a much better eye for fashion than he—thinks it looks awful. Doesn't fit, doesn't suit his aesthetic, doesn't send the messages he wants to send.

**Immediate, brief pain, if he abandons the sunk cost:** *Donating the shirt to Goodwill means that Jonas must bitterly admit to himself that he blew \$30 on an ugly shirt. (Lasts a few seconds or minutes.)*

**Later, drawn-out pain, if he chases the sunk cost:** *Chasing the sunk cost, and keeping and wearing the shirt, costs Jonas space in his closet and the good opinions of anyone who sees him wearing it and agrees with Rochelle. (Lasts months or years.)*



1. Nathan buys an ice cream cone: one scoop of pistachio under one scoop of strawberry. But when he gets past the top fruity scoop, he finds that the pistachio ice cream is terrible—not sweet enough, barely any flavor, and it’s awfully melty.

**Immediate, brief pain, if he abandons the sunk cost:**

**Later, drawn-out pain, if he chases the sunk cost:**



## Answer to 1.

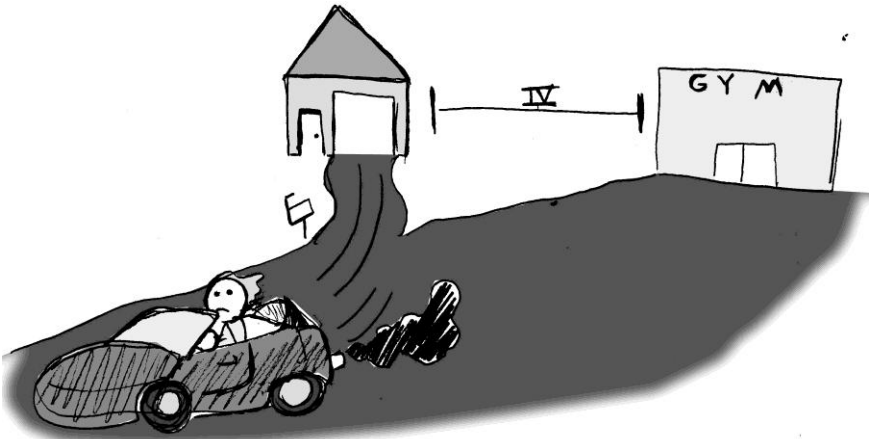
**Immediate, brief pain, if he abandons the sunk cost:** Chucking the ice cream “wastes food” and makes Nathan feel stupid for not tasting both flavors before ordering.

**Later, drawn-out pain, if he chases the sunk cost:** Eating the ice cream doesn’t taste very nice, and loads nutritionally and hedonically useless calories into Nathan. (If you’re going to eat sinful foods, eat high-quality chocolate rather than potato chips—don’t waste calories.)

2. Georgette has an expensive yearlong gym membership to the fancy, well-equipped gym across town. Whenever she goes, she does stick to her planned exercise program for that day... but she only goes about once a month, because the commute is so annoying. Then she discovers that there's a gym just four blocks from her house.

**Immediate, brief pain, if she abandons the sunk cost:**

**Later, drawn-out pain, if she chases the sunk cost:**



## Answer to 2.

**Immediate, brief pain, if she abandons the sunk cost:** Signing up with the neighborhood gym makes Georgette admit that she squandered her money on the distant, inaccessible, fancy gym.

**Later, drawn-out pain, if she chases the sunk cost:** Long commutes once a month, and many more days without exercising at all. (And consistency effects might lure Georgette into renewing her expensive gym membership at the end of the year.)

3. Ken and Bruce are walking home from their yoga class when they spot a beautifully upholstered couch just sitting on the curb, with a sign on it that says “free, take it”. They agree it would go very nicely with their drapes, and manage—just barely—to pick it up between the two of them. Three of the four remaining blocks along, Ken calls for a break and the pair actually sits on the couch—only to realize that it reeks of cigarette smoke.

**Immediate, brief pain, if they abandon the sunk cost:**

**Later, drawn-out pain, if they chase the sunk cost:**



## Answer to 3.

**Immediate, brief pain, if they abandon the sunk cost:** Giving up acknowledges that Ken and Bruce huffed and puffed and sacrificed the relaxation they attained during yoga for nothing.

**Later, drawn-out pain, if they chase the sunk cost:** Taking the couch the rest of the way home and installing it in their living room will make their house stink.



4. Carrie is going to the Honduras for a break. She's gotten half the clothes she wants into her roller bag... which is, unfortunately, two-thirds full. She has a more capacious duffel bag in the closet, but it's not configured the same way, and if she switches, she'll have to re-fold everything.

**Immediate, brief pain, if she abandons the sunk cost:**

**Later, drawn-out pain, if she chases the sunk cost:**



## **Answer to 4.**

**Immediate, brief pain, if she abandons the sunk cost:** If Carrie switches to the duffel bag, it means re-folding everything already folded.

**Later, drawn-out pain, if she chases the sunk cost:** Trying to fit everything into the roller bag means ultimately re-folding all of the clothes, not just some of them - or sticking even more firmly with her luggage choice and leaving behind things Carrie wants to take with her.

5. Alicorn is making an apple pie. After selecting a knife from the drawer and starting to use it, she realizes that it's not a good knife for peeling apples. But she's already gotten the knife all apple-y!

**Immediate, brief pain, if she abandons the sunk cost:**

**Later, drawn-out pain, if she chases the sunk cost:**



## Answer to 5.

**Immediate, brief pain, if she abandons the sunk cost:** Going all the way to the drawer and getting another knife and transporting it all the way back to the kitchen counter.

**Later, drawn-out pain, if she chases the sunk cost:** Trying to peel and carve many more apples with a knife ill-suited to the purpose.