

UNITED WISDOM

I Want the Result but Not the Cost of Achieving It

The Person and the Inner World

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

I-11-N02 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

I Want the Result but Not the Cost of Achieving It

Epigraph

> *“Consider what precedes and follows.”*

Epictetus, Enchiridion §29, Elizabeth Carter's English translation. The Russian version translates this fragment editorially. It is a Stoic ethical invitation to consider an entire action, not a promise that every sacrifice will pay off.

What this article is about

Imagine a hypothetical scene: you want to lead an interesting project without conducting difficult conversations, answering for deadlines, or changing your usual schedule. Or you want to speak a new language fluently while repeated exercises seem too monotonous. The desire for the result remains; desire for a particular route is absent. A harsh conclusion is easy: I must not really want anything. Before reaching it, however, consider the cost itself. What does the result actually require, what has the chosen method added, and what are you being asked to pay without adequate grounds?

This article examines the difference between an attractive outcome and consent to achieving it. Cost includes time, effort, money, uncertainty, and changed commitments; it may affect others' interests. We consider when to change methods, reconsider the goal's scale, or reject an unacceptable condition. There is no demand to prove a desire serious through suffering. There is an opportunity to name the entire action and decide which form is actually available and suitable now.

I. Result and route are different objects of desire

You can want a bright room without enjoying renovation. You can value fine musical performance while tiring of rehearsals. There is no logical contradiction: a result's attraction and feelings toward actions concern different things. Difficulty arises when they are necessarily connected but a decision addresses only one side. Imagining the finished room does not identify who will move furniture, select materials, and organize the work. Moving from image to project requires seeing what makes the image possible in particular circumstances.

Yet a route is rarely a single unchanging set of actions. Renovation can be staged, delegated to specialists, redesigned, or delayed. Each option has costs and limits. Delegation needs money

and responsibility for coordination; a gradual approach needs patience; reduced scale changes the result. “Do I want it strongly enough?” therefore often conceals a more useful question: which version of the result and which method am I considering? Comparing an ideal outcome only with the hardest route may obscure intermediate options worth examining.

Sometimes someone wants the recognition they associate with a result. A difficult project then serves as a proposed means to another desire. This is a possibility for reflection, not an established hidden motive of the reader. In a hypothetical scene, consider what a leadership role offers: work with content, influence over decisions, income, or visible confirmation of competence. Different answers lead to different routes. More influence can be sought without managing people, or leadership chosen with its responsibilities understood. A job title alone does not determine the good desired.

Examining a route adds information rather than devaluing a dream. Until clarification, a desire can remain without a promise to realize it. Distinguish the imagined outcome, an option under investigation, and an accepted commitment. If others already rely on your work, uncertainty needs to be visible. “I like the idea and am still assessing conditions” is more precise than confident agreement whose degree of readiness nobody knows. This response leaves room for interest and an honest boundary between what attracts you and what you will perform.

II. Not every stated cost is necessary

Goals often come surrounded by a ready-made story about achieving them. Professionals must forget rest; good parents must surrender all personal interests; respect requires tolerating humiliation. These statements concern different matters and need grounds. Difficult learning does not prove every teacher's cruelty necessary. Responsibility for a child does not prescribe an identical life for every family. Ask how a particular condition connects with the result and who declared it obligatory.

In a hypothetical language course, several daily hours are proposed. Regular language use belongs to learning, but this schedule may be one option. Another pace changes timing and possibilities while accounting for work and loved ones' care. Identical results cannot be promised without examining the program and conditions. Compare actual formats: which skill is practiced, which workload is planned, and what happens after an absence. This conversation concerns learning's structure, not proof of moral worth or the right to want another skill.

Distinguish necessary actions, organizational requirements, and environmental habits. Learning a task needs some experience; obtaining a particular certificate may require a prescribed examination; attending every informal gathering may be customary. These conditions differ. One can change without losing a skill, another belongs to a particular

qualification, and a third needs separate assessment. Sometimes an organization offers no alternative route. Another environment can then be considered, or its result declined. Rejecting one provider's conditions does not equal rejecting the entire desired good.

Some genuine limits are unpleasant to acknowledge. If a job includes night shifts, a well-worded desire cannot remove them. Alternative schedules can be investigated or another role chosen; the current vacancy may remain unsuitable. Clarifying costs sometimes opens another method and sometimes confirms incompatibility. Both answers are useful. Do not promise yourself that every obstacle will prove an imposed myth. Actual conditions allow a decision that accounts for life instead of endless self-conflict because a particular form of the result does not fit.

III. Cognitive effort can enter the valuation of reward

Westbrook, Kester, and Braver's 2013 study examined monetary reward choices at different N-back task loads. Under those laboratory conditions, greater load reduced offers' subjective value. This is a bounded empirical result, not an explanation of all life decisions. The authors identify limits in the procedure and group comparisons; it cannot determine your character, fatigue's causes, or a goal's authenticity. Methods, relevant results, and discussion were read, rather than the abstract alone.

For our question, the study reminds us to distinguish reward's attraction from attitudes toward required action. Laboratory monetary tasks cannot directly describe career changes, caring for someone, or creative projects, however. Life includes meaning, relationships, health, risk, and changing conditions. The following examples are authored examinations of these circumstances. They do not measure your readiness or supply a desire scale supposedly backed by an exact neuroscientific cause. A personal decision needs available actions and information described within its context.

In hypothetical work, the same task can cost differently on different days. Available time, clarity of requirements, existing demands on attention, and possible help matter. Not every difficulty needs to be explained by insufficient motivation. Ask which parts are clear and which repeatedly require searching for rules. If a task is poorly organized, changed instructions may help more than a stronger promise to work. This practical possibility needs examination locally; one laboratory experiment does not establish it as a universal recommendation.

Conversely, unpleasant effort does not always mean rejecting the route. Some work remains difficult under reasonable conditions and may still be accepted for an important outcome. There is no threshold suitable for everyone. You can accept a limited amount, gather information, or recognize that the price currently exceeds your resources. Consent's precision matters. “This is difficult, but I choose this part” differs from both “Difficulty means I must do

more” and “Difficulty proves the goal false.” Neither extreme replaces consideration of the action.

IV. Ancient examination of consequences does not justify every sacrifice

In Enchiridion §29, Epictetus asks readers to consider what precedes and follows. His Olympic contest example includes preparation, restrictions, and possible defeat. We use the narrow question about an entire action within its Stoic context. Historical prescriptions concerning the body, teachers, and discipline do not become modern medical recommendations. No requirement to tolerate harm for any attractive goal is derived here.

In a hypothetical example, you want to publish a book. Besides a beautiful copy, the project involves writing, feedback, deadlines, and uncertain reader response. Examining consequences also means seeing the possibility that the book is finished but succeeds less than expected. You can then ask whether the work itself remains valuable and which risks are acceptable. If meaning exists only under one guaranteed outcome, investigate who promises that guarantee and on what grounds. Wanting success is permissible; a promise nobody can secure needs separate examination.

The Stoic text expresses a normative view of action. The modern experiment examines a limited choice structure. They meet in an authored question about goals and conditions rather than confirming each other as parts of one proven science. This boundary lets thought be used without excessive authority over readers. Ancient advice may be a useful invitation to attention; it gains no right to label your decision shameful or immature. Revision after new information remains part of responsible participation in your life.

V. Cost also includes what will not be done

Time devoted to a project is unavailable for some other activities. Money spent on education cannot simultaneously pay for everything else. This simple connection disappears when each budget item is considered alone. In a hypothetical scene, an evening course is affordable but overlaps with an important family responsibility. Cost includes changing an agreement or finding help. If only payment is considered, an important part of the route remains hidden until someone else encounters an already completed decision.

Not every good needs conversion to a single monetary value. Closeness, health, and work quality do not become fully comparable through an adjacent number. Name which areas change, what is known, and what still requires agreement. A limited trial period sometimes fits if genuinely reversible and agreed. Sometimes precise professional assessment of financial, legal, or medical conditions is necessary. Practical clarity lies in significant consequences

receiving space in the decision, rather than an attractive table or their presentation as minor details.

Uncertainty has a cost: effort may not produce the expected outcome. Ask which result would be sufficiently valuable, which information permits revision, and where acceptable risk ends. An answer need not be a confident promise. “I accept this stage under these conditions” may be more honest than “I will get there at any cost.” Limited consent distinguishes a chosen attempt from an obligation to continue indefinitely. Other participants need to understand that limit if their plans depend on your readiness.

Costs may be distributed unevenly over time. Money is needed initially, regular tasks emerge later, and visible results come later still. A plan covering only average workload leaves a difficult first month unexpected. In a hypothetical move, see distinct stages: preparation, transition, settling in, and new responsibilities. Name available resources and support for each. Readiness then concerns the actual sequence rather than a convenient average that never exists on any particular day. Where information is scarce, request it before promising.

VI. Other people's lives do not enter your cost by default

Sometimes a project appears feasible because part of the work has silently been assigned to others. Evening study requires a partner always to change schedules; starting a business requires relatives' money; rest after exertion requires a colleague constantly to finish your work. Support can be voluntary and important. Wanting a result does not itself oblige another person to pay for the route. Name the contribution, obtain actual consent, and account for its conditions rather than assuming closeness contains every needed resource.

In a hypothetical family, you discuss a year of study. Money, time, childcare, and possible schedule revision enter the conversation. Another participant can support the goal without accepting the proposed workload. These are different responses. The program can change, tasks be distributed, available help sought, or a stage delayed. Not every limit on contribution proves absent love. Equally, your desire need not be declared unacceptable because the first option does not fit. Joint consideration assesses both participants' forms of involvement instead of measuring affection through unlimited sacrifice.

Another's consent can also change when a project changes substantially. Initial help for a month does not imply several years' commitment. If greater resources prove necessary, another conversation is needed. Contractual or legal obligations sometimes already exist; their content needs examination through actual documents and relevant local rules. This article does not establish those rights. It retains an ordinary ethical boundary: considering your cost is insufficient when an action affects people who have not agreed to their proposed share of consequences.

VII. Reduced scale can preserve an important good

Reconsidering a goal can feel frightening because reduction sounds like defeat. See what is preserved. If music matters, a local ensemble may answer a desire without requiring an international career. If another skill interests you, a limited course may supply the relevant part without a long qualification program. These options yield different results and should not be quietly declared equivalent. Compare actual goods: performance, recognition, income, professional status, enjoyment of work. Reducing one dimension then does not automatically lose all meaning.

In a hypothetical example, someone wants a major cultural event but has resources for a small gathering. It can be considered a trial, an independent format, or an insufficient answer to the desire. Each requires clear naming. If it is only a first stage, avoid promising continuation without resources. If independent, its value need not depend on future expansion. Scale revision becomes substantial when based on desire's object, rather than an obligation to declare every outcome successful at any cost.

Pace restrictions also change a project. Slower need not mean worse, but timing sometimes belongs to the result. Mastering material for a particular examination differs from studying for interest. Advice not to hurry cannot preserve every condition at once. Establish which deadlines are genuine, which come from comparison, and what postponement changes. A calmer route may fit; the present goal may be unavailable in this schedule. Recognizing that grounds the next choice without accusing yourself of insufficiently strong desire.

When comparing scales, consider an ordinary day after reaching the goal. Managers handle everyday coordination as well as interesting decisions. A small workshop owner performs work and organizes its conditions. If only the role's ceremonial side attracts you, investigate whether its entire scope or one activity is wanted. This does not discover a true vocation for you. It adds ordinary life to the image of success. Sometimes desire becomes clearer; sometimes a more suitable interest emerges, previously obscured by an overly broad result's name.

VIII. Past payment does not prescribe unlimited further payment

Once underway, someone may continue only because too much has been invested. Past work matters: it supplied experience, materials, relationships, and sometimes obligations. Past effort alone does not prove the next cost justified, however. In a hypothetical project, preparation is paid for before additional conditions substantially change risk. The new stage needs consideration through present information. Acknowledging loss hurts; that feeling does not sufficiently justify every demand appearing after initial consent.

Revision does not mean everything done was meaningless. Some results remain: limits learned, part of a skill acquired, interest clarified. Yet loss need not obligatorily become a useful lesson to permit stopping. Sometimes the price was high without producing the desired outcome. That can be stated directly. The next decision concerns what is available now, remaining commitments, and what can be concluded without further disproportionate damage. Honest description leaves room for both regret and responsible exit from an action that no longer fits.

If others rely on continuation, stopping needs conversation about effects. Work transfer, reduced completion, another deadline, or professional assessment of obligations may be possible. Not everything can be abandoned instantly without damage. Consequences also do not imply continuation at any cost. Distinguish concluding a particular accepted responsibility from indefinitely extending a project to justify the past. This transition may be difficult, but it identifies actual tasks rather than imposing a general requirement to prove the initial choice never mistaken.

IX. An unacceptable price does not become virtue through difficulty

Some conditions need assessment separately from a result's attraction: humiliation, danger, violated rights, deception, coercion. Difficulty alone cannot make them useful. In hypothetical employment, promotion is promised for concealing significant mistakes from clients. This concerns the means' nature and consequences for others, rather than ordinary workload. Professional growth can be wanted while the proposed route is rejected. This distinction preserves desire without making the result justify any action leading, or merely promising to lead, toward it.

Some limits require information absent from general reflection. Work safety, health, credit conditions, and a contract's validity cannot be established through an inspiring goal image. Appropriate verified information and professional assessment are needed. This article does not decide them for readers. Its practical contribution is keeping a significant area from disappearing beneath “You must be willing to pay.” Refusal remains part of consideration; a desire's seriousness is not measured by willingness to expose yourself or others to uncertain harm for someone else's promise.

Not every unpleasant part is unacceptable, however. Feedback can be uncomfortable, coordination lengthy, and learning monotonous. Name the difficulty's content and connection with the task. Correct criticism of work differs from personal humiliation; skill requirements differ from arbitrary loyalty tests. Sometimes the difficult part is then accepted. Sometimes a reasonable route exists elsewhere. Sometimes conditions remain unsuitable. A decision rests

on differences between actions, not universal rejection of discomfort or general approval of every ordeal.

X. Clear enough consent concerns the next stage

Every consequence of a long project cannot be known beforehand. Describe the next significant stage: actions, available resources, information needed, and revision point. In hypothetical learning, this may be one module followed by assessing format and workload. A trial stage does not fit if it already creates a large irreversible cost or hidden obligation to continue. Reversibility needs examination through actual conditions, not the label “test.” An honest boundary enables participation without invented certainty about a distant result.

Consent to effort can coexist with disliking particular parts. Every repetition or coordination need not become loved for a chosen route to make sense. Do not force yourself to call good what needs alteration, however. You can support the goal, perform an accepted task, and propose a better method. This response is more complex than a slogan about total dedication: it includes concrete responsibility and the right to assess conditions. Desire stops being an examination in the absence of doubt and becomes participation for which you can answer within a clear scope.

After the stage, return to desire's object. Is the result clearer? Which costs were expected and which discovered? What will you continue with new information? The answer may lead to further work, altered methods, reduced scale, or stopping. No outcome is prescribed as correct in advance. Now the goal is considered alongside actions, conditions, and affected people. “I want the result but not the cost” can then change from an accusation into an initial question answered concretely and maturely while retaining interest and the right to choose.

Revision conditions are better connected to observable information. Has learning's content become clearer, is the agreed schedule followed, is the necessary resource confirmed, does the chosen result still matter? An arbitrary numerical standard is unnecessary. Understand beforehand which question the stage addresses and what it does not test. One good week does not describe an annual budget; one unpleasant class does not establish an entire program's unsuitability. Choose an adequate check for the upcoming decision. The next step thereby retains inquiry's meaning rather than becoming an endless test of tolerating difficulties.

What this means in practice

Choose one goal if clarifying readiness would help. Write the desired result and the good within it that matters. Describe the current route as ordinary actions: what must be done, by whom, when, under which conditions. Name money, time, effort, uncertainty, and changed commitments separately. No exact figures need invention where unavailable. Unknowns can be marked as questions needing a document, conversation, or professional information.

Distinguish costs related to the task itself, the chosen method, and what remains unclear. Examine grounds for significant requirements. Is another format, smaller scale, different deadline, or help with actual consent possible? Do not assign readiness to others in advance. If their lives are affected, name the proposed contribution and leave room for their response. For safety, health, legal, and financial questions, use appropriate verified information; the exercise does not replace assessment.

Formulate the next stage's limit. For instance: “I will study this module on this schedule, then decide whether to continue.” Clarify hidden obligations and irreversible costs. An unacceptable condition need not enter a personal examination of desire's strength. If the route remains difficult but suitable, difficulty can be acknowledged without demanding it be loved. The practice is voluntary and promises neither motivation, success, nor freedom from regret.

After the chosen step, compare actual and assumed conditions. What is clearer, what needs change, which commitments now exist? A sufficient outcome is one precise consent, refusal, information request, or new route. Desire can remain while action is postponed. Avoid presenting a deferred possibility as a promise others must rely upon. You may value a result, examine its price, and choose the participation you can actually accept within your life now.

Key quotation

> *“And, after all, lose the victory.”*

Epictetus, Enchiridion §29, Elizabeth Carter's translation. The Russian rendering is editorial. This fragment retains possible failure after preparation. It neither declares every defeat deserved nor justifies harmful conditions.

Connections between traditions

Comparison	Proximity and boundary
Stoic consideration of action ↔ cost of a result	Preparation and consequences matter; historical prescriptions are not modern medical recommendations.
Laboratory psychology ↔ reward's attraction	Load entered valuation in a particular task; this is not a universal account of life goals' meaning.
Personal readiness ↔ reciprocity	Your consent does not assign others their share of participation.
Route revision ↔ responsibility	New information may change decisions; particular previous obligations need separate consideration.

This is an authored map of questions. It does not merge philosophical norms and experimental results into a single proof or promise healing effects.

Sources

1. Epictetus. The Enchiridion, Elizabeth Carter translation, §29. The whole of §29 and immediate context were read. A bounded philosophical distinction between goal, preparation, and consequences is used without transferring historical bodily prescriptions.

2. Westbrook A., Kester D., Braver T. S. What Is the Subjective Cost of Cognitive Effort? Load, Trait, and Aging Effects Revealed by Economic Preference, 2013. PLOS ONE8(7):e68210. Abstract, paradigm, methods, relevant results, and discussion with limitations were read. The page states CC BY; authors and publication are credited. The work does not test the proposed life practice.

Epictetus is a Stoic teacher; Elizabeth Carter is a historical English translator and scholar. Their text is used here as philosophical reasoning. Andrew Westbrook, Daria Kester, and Todd S. Braver are psychology researchers; the 2013 publication lists Washington University in Saint Louis. This describes roles and affiliation in the source, not current positions.

Tags

desire, result, achievement cost, effort, goal, means, choice, conditions, commitments, reciprocity, uncertainty, scale, pace, learning, project, refusal, revision, Epictetus, Carter, Stoicism, Westbrook, Kester, Braver, cognitive load, responsibility.

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.