

STOP SABOTAGING YOUR OWN SUCCESS

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Introduction

What gives our lives true meaning is a sense of purpose, which translates into a will to survive and thrive. But, for a variety of reasons, you may find that your efforts to succeed are stymied or cut short. Unfortunately, many times, it is not life or other people that keep us from reaching our goals or achieving success. Instead, it is us.

You may make excuses for why this is not the right time for you to try something new. You may doubt your own abilities to succeed. You may be hesitant to embark on a significant life change. There are several behaviors and beliefs that just get in your way of attaining what you want in life.

This is known as self-sabotage, and these behaviors and thoughts can keep you from realizing your dreams and getting what you want out of life. So, why do you sometimes sabotage yourself? And what kinds of behaviors are self-sabotaging? And, more importantly, how do you stop believing and acting in ways that prevent you from being happy in life?

This guide shares with you the ins and outs of self-sabotaging beliefs and how they manifest themselves into action. Plus, we will go deep into how to change these negative behaviors into more positive actions, so that you can finally reach everything you want in life.

Why We Sabotage Ourselves

Within our minds, there exists the conscious desires as well as the subconscious wants. When these are in conflict with one another, you may find that you are sabotaging your success to satisfy the deeper parts of yourself.

Self-sabotage is a manifestation of fear. Somewhere deep inside yourself, you have a voice telling you that “you cannot accomplish this,” and you become afraid that you are going to fail, that people will notice your inferiority, or that you will never be happy in life. You are afraid, so you try to prevent your failure through a variety of actions.

We all have negative thoughts about ourselves from time to time. This is not unusual. But, when you hear that negative inner voice consistently, you are likely to find ways to sabotage your progress toward achieving your goals.

One of the reasons you may be sabotaging your happiness is because you feel undeserving of success. This lack of self-worth leads to feeling inadequate and engaging in actions that impede the realization of goals. Even when you are having some success or something good happens to you, you may feel like you are unworthy of this positive outcome, so you will do something to ensure that your success does not continue. This is a classic example of fear of failure.

For some, self-sabotage occurs of a need to control what happens in life. Rather than living with uncertainty, you need to control the outcome, even if it is not positive. This fear of the unknown can lead to feeling better about steering a sinking ship than being safe on an unknown island.

Another reason you may sabotage your own success is that you think of yourself as an imposter. As you experience more success, you may start to feel like people will eventually figure out you are not as competent as they believe. This can lead to behaviors that keep you from rising higher, which limits the distance you could potentially fall later on.

If you have had this mindset most of your life, then you may sabotage yourself because it feels familiar and consistent. If you have been abused, exploited, or overlooked for a long time, it can

feel unnerving to be in a new position that is not as negative. Many times, you will sabotage yourself because it puts you back into a situation that is oddly (and sadly) reassuring.

So, what does it really mean to sabotage yourself? What do these behaviors even look like? Let's get a handle on how this mindset looks in everyday life.

What Self-Sabotage Look Likes

Self-sabotage manifests itself in many ways. Here are some typical self-sabotaging behaviors that you may recognize.

- Giving in to the fear of failure.
- Never saying “no” to others.
- Not fully considering the consequences of your actions.
- Ignoring instructions.
- Not taking your current circumstances into account when making decisions.
- Being stubborn about your “ways” or refusing to be flexible when solving problems.
- Stopping yourself from taking risks.
- Fretting about unimportant details but not worrying about what is most important.
- Never planning ahead.
- Being too prideful to admit your flaws or mistakes.
- Complaining consistently about bad luck, circumstances, or other people.
- Comparing yourself to others.
- Focusing too much on daydreams but never acting.
- Incessantly worrying before objectively analyzing the situation.
- Accepting others’ advice blindly.
- Procrastinating or being a perfectionist.
- Starting projects but not finishing them.
- Using self-talk such as “I can’t do this....,” “I’m too busy...,” or “I’m not ready.”

These behaviors, if part of a pattern or used regularly, show that you are sabotaging yourself and limiting your success in life. Regardless of how your self-sabotaging behavior manifests itself in your life, you must find a way to overcome these habits to achieve your own success. You owe it to yourself to develop healthier habits, which can enhance your self-confidence and esteem and allow you to realize your dreams.

It is possible to change your mindset and alter your behaviors to escape the self-sabotage that is holding you back. Now that you know what self-sabotage looks like, it is time to develop new, more positive habits to guide your life.

How To Stop Sabotage

#1. The first step to breaking the self-sabotage cycle is to recognize which your behaviors are holding you back. Start by considering the goals you have had for yourself for extended periods but which you have not been able to achieve. Look for areas in your life where you are consistently procrastinating or avoiding big decisions.

Look for ways that a lack of motivation or persistent negative emotions are preventing you from making progress toward a goal. Tun into those areas of your life where you have nagging doubts or questions, where you want to make substantial changes but, for some reason, can never make progress. These indicate self-sabotage.

#2. The next step to ending your self-sabotaging behaviors is to pay attention to your negative thinking. When you are talking to yourself, what do you say? What types of words do you use to describe yourself? As you are doing things, pay attention to how you talk to yourself and write down all the negative self-talk you hear. Those automatic thoughts tell you a lot about from where your self-sabotaging behaviors are coming, so you know how to change them.

#3. Next, focus on challenging your negative thoughts and actions. When you hear that inner voice bashing you or trying to stall your progress, ask yourself what is really behind it all. Are your fears that are guiding your behavior rational (probably not), and what facts do you have to support your fear or doubt? Look for ways that you are preventing yourself from making positive change and go after those actions specifically.

#4. To replace these negative thoughts and actions, you need new, more positive ones. Develop a positive mantra you repeat to yourself when you start to hear your negative thoughts. Find positive actions you can take to help you achieve your goal, and set small, attainable goals that will help you build confidence and competency.

As you work on improving your actions and self-talk, it is important to acknowledge when you start to avoid this challenging work. Avoidance is a common tool for self-sabotage, and we tell

yourself all kinds of excuses to justify a lack of progress. Be sure you are recognizing avoidance behaviors and keeping your eye on the important goal you are trying to carry out.

While following these simple but crucial steps to changing your mindset and behavior, it is helpful to remember that change takes time. Below are some tips to help you stick with your goal and to end your self-sabotaging actions once and for all.

Tips for Learning to Stop Self-Sabotage Behaviors

Changing behavior is tricky and being prepared with a game plan and lots of helpful advice will ensure you are prepared for what it really takes to become a better you. Learning to stop sabotaging your life and start realizing your dreams is possible, and here are some helpful tips to get you there.

Regret is More Powerful than Failure

When you start to doubt your efforts at changing your life and developing more positive mindsets, it will be helpful to remember the power of regret. Later in your life, when you look back on what you have and have not done, you will remember all those things you really wanted but never achieved. You will not remember the setbacks or failures, but you can be haunted by those unrealized dreams in life.

Embrace Change

One of the reasons we accept and get stuck with negative behaviors is we learn to crave monotony. Our brains like consistency, and when all you deliver to it are negative thoughts and actions, it will learn to desire those, even though they are not very healthy for you. As you build your confidence and change to new behaviors, your mind will accept the new “normal,” but until then, you should embrace the cognitive challenges that novelty presents.

Learn from Your Mistakes

At the end of each day, reflect on the events and circumstances you met as well as your reaction to them. What could you have done differently? What will you do tomorrow that is informed by what you learned today? Learning from your mistakes is a sign that you embrace the ability to learn and grow rather than feeling stuck in your present situation. The more you reflect and

make this a regular habit, the more comfortable you will feel with setbacks, challenges, and change.

Focus on the Big Picture

Instead of getting caught up in your own destructive behaviors and mindsets, focus instead on what is really important in your life. From time to time, you should reflect upon your values and what it is you really want to accomplish, which can clarify your goals and help you stay motivated. The “why” is important for making lasting change, so do not lose sight of that.

Keep a Journal

Anytime you are working on changing yourself, keeping a journal can be extremely helpful. Journals are tools that allow you to write freely without fear of criticism, to record your thoughts without judgment, to look back upon your entries to consider your motivations or fears, and to express yourself openly. Writing every day can become a healthy part of your self-worth journey as you explore the real reasons why you continue to sabotage your own success.

Let Go of Comparisons

Comparing yourself to others will do absolutely nothing to help or motivate you. Comparison, more often than not, makes you feel inadequate, which can cause you to limit your own achievement. By worrying about what others are doing, have accomplished, or think about you, you are placing valuing and merit on them that they have not earned nor deserved. The only person you should be trying to please is yourself. The only person who has to live your life, with all its positive and negative consequences, is you.

Every one of us is unique, and the circumstances that govern your life are entirely different from those that control others. So, it is always a false comparison, no matter what. Focus on being true to yourself, and you will not have to worry about what others are doing or saying. Comparison is merely a way to limit your potential, so liberate yourself to become your authentic self.

Strive for Action, Not Perfection

One of the ways you can get in your own way when it comes to succeeding in life is to focus too much on perfection. When we strive to be THE best or accomplish THE most, we find new and powerful ways to become stuck toward making any progress at all. When your goal is perfection, it is quite easy to become stuck, paralyzed by fear of making a mistake or achieving less than the absolute best.

When it comes to defeating your self-sabotaging behaviors, it is best to focus on getting stuff done than on being perfect in all that you do. You will make mistakes. There will be setbacks. But those lessons and opportunities are wasted if you do not learn from them and keep pushing forward. Do not work on being perfect. Work on being better, and it will come.

Stop Complaining and Start Solving

A great deal of energy is wasted in complaining, lamenting, wallowing, and otherwise just thinking negative thoughts about your life. When something bad happens, instead of spending time on these negative thoughts and words, focus instead of solutions. Focus your mind on finding answers, exploring possibilities, and looking for insight, and you will soon realize you have no room for complaining in your life.

Have Patience

The journey toward self-actualization is long and full of ups and downs. When you are trying to change a mindset and negative behaviors, particularly ones you have held tight to for years or even decades, it will take time and patience to achieve your dream.

Having confidence that you are making the best choice for yourself, and that you have the strength and tenacity to realize your dream, will help you pick yourself up when you stumble, to try again when you fail. Having a positive attitude and patience is vitally important when building your self-worth and focusing on improving your actions.

Work on Realistic Expectations

Those who are likely to self-sabotage often will set their expectations incredibly low. Keeping your expectations in check means you will not be disappointed when things do not work out, right? When you are trying to change your mindset and behavior, though, you might think that the opposite is the better choice. However, setting expectations too high can lead to a quick setback, more disappointment, and derailing your efforts. The key is to find a middle ground.

Examine your resources, conditions, and circumstances with an objective eye. Thinking about what is realistic for you to accomplish. Ask others for their input. Then set your bar just a little bit higher than that middle ground. This is known as the learning zone, and it is where you are likely to realize your best chances for success. High but realistic goals will help you achieve more in less time.

Learn from Others

Look around you at people in your life who have accomplished what you want or who have realized their dreams. Those people, the ones living the life they always imagined, what makes them “better” than you? But how are their actions different from yours, and what can you learn from them to help you achieve your goals?

Ask Yourself More Questions

When it comes to unlocking your potential and eliminating the self-sabotaging behaviors that are limiting your goals, you need to get to know yourself better. Understanding your motivations and fears will help you stop engaging in negative behaviors and start realizing your potential.

When you catch yourself engaging in these negative behaviors, use the opportunity to ask yourself what you can learn from this experience and what you will do differently in the future. Think about past incidences where you have sabotaged yourself, what were the potential benefits for your negative behavior, and what potential benefits did you miss out on by not attaining your goal?

Questions help you expand your possibilities and explore new options for the future. They help you get in touch with your true motivations and feelings. And, they put you in a better position to stop new self-sabotaging behaviors from happening.

Create Positive Self-Talk

Talking positively to yourself or keeping up a stream of ongoing positive mental chatter is an excellent way to destroy the self-limiting thoughts that are holding you back. You may not even realize that you are already talking to yourself all day, every day. This internal conversation may not even be conscious, but you are always talking to yourself about your behavior and performance.

When your self-talk is consistently negative, your actions will be, as well. When you replace this with a barrage of positivity and optimism, you can replace the negative thoughts with ones that support your success and happiness. Any time you hear yourself talking negatively, start your positive chatter stream, and keep it going!

Think of Change as an Experiment

When you first learned the fundamental skills of walking, talking, and exploring your environment, you did this in stages. It took time, years even. You made mistakes, you fell down, and you may have gotten a little bruised now and then. But you got back up and kept on working at it, didn't you? You did not give up, which is why you are here today. Guess what? Changing your actions now is exactly the same.

To learn something new, we must explore, make mistakes, and keep practicing. We have to experiment with what works for us to know what does not. We must be open to stumbling, falling down, and picking ourselves right back up. It will not happen overnight. It will not happen in a nice, even flow with no mishaps. But, if you have faith and patience, it WILL happen.

Get Help

When you are trying something new and making substantial change, it is helpful to get advice from other people. Think of someone in your life who has carried out a hard goal or who has changed their lives for the better. When you are struggling or need some encouragement or advice, these are the people to whom you can turn. They have personal experience that can help you, and you can learn from their suggestions.

If you are tackling some really ingrained ideas that stem from deep emotional wounds, it is okay to ask for help from a professional, too. Mental health counselors and therapists are good choices when you are ready to confront the core of your issues that are leading to your continued negative behavior. Seeking help is perhaps one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself.

Have a Plan

Many people sabotage their success but lacking a plan for how they are going to achieve their dreams. While you cannot control everything or know the future, you can have a well-thought-out plan that helps you respond to the curveballs that life will inevitably throw your way. Solid plans are necessary to do big things in life, and without them, you are setting yourself up for failure.

When you are making plans for your future, be sure to consider the potential obstacles or challenges you are likely to meet and devise strategies for how you will handle these. Sometimes, just knowing what could happen is enough to wipe away irrational fears of the unknown.

Finally, make a plan for how you will handle disappointment and possible failure. Knowing it can happen and having a strategy for dealing with them will give you the confidence that you can handle anything, good or bad, that comes your way.

Be Smart About Your Risks

When you take more risks in life, you are likely to end up with fewer regrets and struggle less with uncertainty. Taking risks is just as important in transforming your behavior as it is in achieving any goal. So, do not be afraid to try new things, behave in new ways, and explore new patterns of action in your life. You have the power to change your life, but only if you make up your mind that you are worth the effort.

Final Thoughts

If you want to achieve a dream in your life, it is not enough to want it. You have to have a plan, put in lots of effort and work, and you must believe in your ability to do what it is you set out to do. When you lack faith in yourself and allow your actions to be controlled by fear, you may be acting in ways that are sabotaging your ability to reach your goals.

Procrastination, lack of planning, and avoiding risks are just a few of the many ways that sabotaging behaviors can prevent you from accomplishing your goals. Understanding the emotions that are behind these behaviors is essential for changing your mindset, which can lead to more positive actions.

You control how you act and react in this world, but when you allow low self-esteem and fear of failure or the unknown to guide those actions, you may be your own worst enemy when it comes to success and happiness. Learning not to fall prey to self-sabotaging behaviors can help you finally realize your dreams and living the life you have always wanted.

You can change your mindset and your behaviors and to stop limiting your chances for success. Recognizing your negative behaviors is the first step, as is questioning the origins of your beliefs. Once you have tackled your motives, you can start developing more positive ways of thinking and behaving. When you stop getting in your own way, you can reach your goals and experience the success you have always wanted.