

Self-Sabotage – Why We Do It and How to Stop it
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Let's face it! *All* of us shoot ourselves in the foot!

- Wanting to exercise, we sleep instead.
- Planning to eat more vegetables, we buy chips on the way home from work.
- Wanting a relationship, we push people away.

Why do we do this?

First; we live in a broken world, and *all* us are a broken people. So in addition can be found in the Bible (which gives us a meticulous understanding of what went wrong, and how God is fixing it), psychology has discovered how we can think differently.

What is Self-Sabotage?

Self-sabotage is a pattern where we unconsciously (or unconsciously) undermine ourselves.

- For example, we fail to meet our goals by creating ones that are so lofty that we are *sure* to fail. This then sets up a feedback loop of harmful feelings about ourselves.
- We fail to plan or problem-solve appropriately by engaging in self-defeating actions that actually go against our plans

But why do we do this?

Psychology has reduced the reasons to a [few](#).

1. Fear:

We often sabotage ourselves because of [our fear of success](#).

2. Leaving Our Comfort Zone:

We want to stay in our comfort zone, even though it may not be necessarily comfortable.

For example, [Lou Tice](#) describes in his [book](#) how Michael, his first adopted son was brought home from his first day of the First Grade in a police car.

And then it only got worse! When Michael began setting fires in the house, Lou sat him down to ask him why he was setting the fires. Michael's answer; "I don't know!"

They discovered that Michael had been raised in a home where the parents did unspeakable things to him. So when he began his new life in a loving house with Lou and his wife Diane, he was COMPLETELY out of his comfort zone; so much so that he attempted to burn Lou's house down! (He did not, by the way, and grew into a wonderful person.)

So a comfort zone is not necessarily comfortable.

3. **Low self-esteem:** How we feel about ourselves is one of the most vital psychological competencies we can build, because it lies at the heart of our belief that we can change our lives, learn new things, or develop better behaviors and patterns. If we lack this belief, we are likely to experience learned helplessness and will not even contemplate taking action on making changes in our lives

The reason; because we do not fundamentally believe we will succeed.

So What Can We Do?

Clinical psychologist Ahona Guha suggests four ways to break out of these destructive patterns.

1. First...*Understand* the pattern

The first step in combating self-sabotage is to understand what lies behind it. It is unlikely that you are sabotaging all the areas of your life all of the time. For instance, you might find yourself that exercising regularly, but binge eating just enough to keep the weight on.

So consider the areas where you shoot yourself in the foot. What sets them apart from areas of greater competence? What lies behind your self-sabotage?

2. Consider the cost

What will you lose, or fail to gain, if you continue acting in the current manner? Choices have far-reaching consequences and the choice to not attend the gym today might

mean that you make the same choice over and over out of habit and ease, eventually developing bad health behaviors or physical illnesses. We often focus on short-term gains and pleasures and forget about long-term impacts.

And remember that your brain is continually rewiring itself; based on the choices you are making!

3. Clarify your values and goals

If you routinely struggle with committing to actions or fulfilling goals, it might be helpful to clarify your values and ensure that your goals are aligned with your values. We are more likely to commit to value-driven action (e.g., joining a community group because we value our community) than goals based on avoidance or comparison.

4. Behave in the *opposite* way

If you sabotage yourself often, take some time to list how. For example, do you forget to answer texts from friends and alienate them? Do you ignore assignments and then fail a subject for a degree you want?

Break the difficulty down in as much detail as possible and formulate a plan to act the *opposite*. If you are leaving things until the last moment, get a planner and start planning four weeks ahead.

Some Final Thoughts - Be Kind to Yourself

When you make constructive choices, you will discover that for each step forward, you must often take a step back.

However...after despondently discovering that step back, be kind to yourself, like a gentle and loving parent.

There is ALWAYS...a next time!

Wow!