



Challenge, Action, Kindness, Energy



Self-Sabotage – Do you do it?

I do, self-sabotage can often happen.

You see being a coach doesn't mean that I don't experience the same challenges as many of my clients.

I became a coach *because* I experience the same challenges; it means I understand the challenges; it means that I know from experience what works and it means that I'm human!

I have to remind myself of the same techniques that I use with others.

So what is self-sabotage?

Well, in my experience it's the conflict between what you say you want to happen and what you allow to happen for yourself.

It's not just about having the thoughts and feelings that conflict with your goals; it's about them leading to us behaving in a way that actually works against us achieving our goal.

This self-sabotage can take place in any area of our lives; it could be financial, work related, business related, it may be associated with our self-development, our health and well-being, or even our relationships.

What does self-sabotage actually look like? I'm sure everyone has their own version, but let me share a few to get you thinking.

Health & Well-being

You have really been looking after yourself for a month. Eating tasty and nourishing food because you have been making the time to cook for yourself because you *are* worth it.

Wonderful, now self-sabotage and celebrate by spending the weekend eating fatty, sugary food that you don't really want or like and will make you feel lethargic and unable to focus.

Finances

You might be saving up for something. It may be a holiday, a course you've always wanted to do; you have been doing quite well, building up the funds to the point where the goal is in sight.

Cue self-sabotage by spending it. It may be on an extravagant birthday present for someone else; or on kitchen gadgets for yourself that you simply don't need.

Relationships

You have been in a relationship now for a few months and everything is going well. Too well.

This is usually the point where you begin to notice things that irritate you, you begin 'testing' the other party with your behaviour and complaints until the relationship falls apart.

Work

You never get the promotion to the next level. Why? Well you're a great worker, always receiving praise and being recognised for your achievement until the promotion becomes available.

That's when you self-sabotage by starting to fall short of targets, making mistakes, being careless and not completing work on time.

Why do we do this?

Why do we act in a way that is completely against our own best interests? What is the reason for this self-sabotage?

Sometimes it almost feels as if it's something pre-programmed in us. Perhaps it is, perhaps it is a deep-rooted belief that we are only allowed to reach a certain level of success, a certain level of happiness?

So, has self-sabotage become our way of managing our success and happiness to stay within these prescribed levels? We will always be loyal to our subconscious beliefs, and if our subconscious belief is that we only deserve a certain level of happiness, health or success then we will be unlikely to reach past that.

Unless we manage to change that belief. Almost as if we are carrying out an upgrade, creating a new blueprint of behaviour and belief.

What causes that subconscious belief?

Well here we could veer into the realms of nature versus nurture; the brain is not a blank slate when we are born, we may come with a pre-wired propensity for this type of thinking or we may have created it ourselves. The brain really is quite remarkable! When we think a thought we fire neurons, then thinking the same thought the next day fires the same neurons. Now if we keep doing this for 21 days, these neurons begin to form stronger relationships and the brain then makes this an automatic thought in order to free up energy, it's helping out!

It could be that the "only allowed a certain level of success" thought is simply a chemical signature.

Now, if we can create this thought through this process we can surely create a replacement and if this is a pre-wired propensity then surely with strong enough nurture we could create a new belief?

Whatever the cause, we are super at recognising self-sabotage in others but we aren't as skilful at recognising it in ourselves. The most effective way to help ourselves stop self-sabotaging behaviour is to increase our self-awareness.

I've certainly found that as I continue to develop my Mindfulness practice I am increasing my self-awareness and as a result and reducing the occurrences of self-sabotage.

Now that is my self-awareness in the moment, but what about my self-awareness regarding this whole belief system around what I deserve?

1. I spent time noticing what level I felt I deserved in each area of my life.

To be honest this was quite tough and I had to explore it by considering if I had become stuck in any area, for example, this could be a certain level of income, or it may be looking after myself for a particular length of time; for some it may be losing that last ½ stone, or running that extra mile. Whatever it is, become aware of it, we cannot change this level if we don't know where it's set to begin with!

2. I had a word with myself!

By this I mean that I accepted responsibility. Yes, there are a number of things that happened in my past that will have formed an initial trigger and maintenance of a particular belief. That was a long time ago. It's my responsibility now! I can choose to maintain this level or I can choose to change it by changing my belief. It's entirely up to me and it's entirely within my ability to do it. The same goes for you!

3. Identify the behaviours that get in the way

- **Oversleeping** is certainly a way to avoid doing what is needed to achieve your goals. I'm curious then, when the alarm goes off do you hit the snooze button? What could change if you just got up when the alarm went off?
- **Irritability** leads us to snap at those around us and become focused on the perceived shortcomings of others. It becomes a useful distraction to pull us away from our goal and stops us carrying out the tasks that we need to do to achieve our goal. It can also lead us down the path of blaming others and could stop us taking full responsibility for our actions.

- Worry takes over and prevents us taking action, it paralyses us. Worry can be useful if it helps us consider what could go wrong so that we're able to plan ahead and pre-empt any problems.
- Perfectionism is a form of self-sabotage. Obsessing over trivial details rather than working on what's most important.
- What happens when things speed up? When we gain traction and feel that we have momentum and are well on our way to reaching our goal? Do we pull back? Do we slow down? Maybe more research is needed, maybe we need to read a few more books!
- Procrastination! We can find many different ways for this one! Remember, "Procrastination is like a credit card, it's a lot of fun until you get the bill!" *Christopher Parker.*

4. Change our story!

This is one of the many areas of NLP that I really love! We can re-frame things! I mentioned earlier that we can create a new belief. This is it! It takes effort and commitment but it is most definitely worth it!

5. Identify and re-frame negative beliefs.

Think about the goal you want to achieve then notice what thoughts pop into your head as the mind chatter begins. A common negative belief is "There's no way I can do that". Try to flip it to 'reaching this goal is going to be a challenge and I will have to work hard which is fine because this is very important to me". Do this for all the negative thoughts that pop up. You may want to try visualising your success.

6. Build your self-esteem

Quite simply, if we invest some time in building our self-esteem, we are less likely to self-sabotage because we feel that we deserve what we are working towards. You may want to reflect on some of the things you have done, that you are proud of and the ways you help other people. These are what is important to you. Only you. It doesn't matter what anybody else did or what they say about these things, they are yours and you are proud of them.

This is why I believe it's so critical to have a daily routine that involves visualisation, affirmations and a personalised guided meditation to befriend your inner-critic and create & nurture your inner-cheerleader.



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