

A Repeated Cycle of Self-Sabotage

Have you ever wanted something so badly, for so long, tried so hard to get it, but failed? Have you ever set goals and objectives that you didn't reach? Or have you ever wondered why you keep repeating the same patterns of behavior over and over again and therefore keep getting the same pitiful results? All of us at one point or another go through these phases. In fact, many of us go through these **self-sabotage** cycles on a weekly basis and as a consequence we live below the potential of our own abilities. We regret the things we didn't do, yet wonder why we keep getting stuck in these limiting patterns.

What is Self-Sabotage?

Self-sabotage is any behavior, thought, emotion or action that holds you back from getting what you want consciously. Moreover, it is the conflict that exists between conscious desires and unconscious wants that manifests in self-sabotage patterns. It not only prevents you from reaching your goal, but also becomes a safety mechanism that protects you against disappointment. In other words, your brain is protecting you from getting hurt by doing what it thinks is best, which is keeping you within your comfort zone.

Reasons for Self-Sabotage

Self-sabotage tends to linger in our lives because of a lack of self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, and self-belief. Likewise, we suffer from self-sabotage patterns because we are unable to manage our emotions effectively. We tend to react to events, circumstances and people in ways that hinder our progress and prevent us from reaching our goals and objectives. Self-sabotage is also used as a method of coping with difficult situations or high expectations of ourselves or others that we unconsciously feel we are not capable of reaching. No matter what our reasons for self-sabotage it is clear that if we don't do something about it, that we will continue to live a life full of regrets and unfulfilled expectations.

Types of Self-Sabotage

Self-sabotage can come in many forms and manifest in our lives in many different ways. Here is a list of methods that we often use to sabotage our own success:

- Fear of failure.
- Fear of taking risks.
- Fear of making mistakes.
- Inability to listen to instructions carefully.
- Inability to plan ahead.
- Inability to say "no" to others.
- Inability to consider the consequences of our actions.
- Inability to think carefully before making decisions.
- Inability to critical thinking or practically.
- Inability to think flexibly about problems.
- Inability to admit mistakes or errors.
- Worrying constantly.
- Having unrealistic expectations.
- Critically judging ourselves or others.
- Constantly comparing yourself to others.
- Always complaining about people, life, circumstances or perceived bad luck.
- The habit of procrastination.

- The habit of perfectionism.
- Limiting beliefs, emotions and attitudes.
- Limiting thoughts focused on what's not working or on wishful daydreams.

When it comes to our limiting thoughts, we must pay close attention to the excuses we tend to make that prevent us from moving forward. Here are some examples:

This won't work...

I can't do this...

I'm too busy right now...

I'm just not ready yet...

I'm just not good enough...

Each of the patterns listed above has its own set of consequences that manifest in a variety of ways in our lives. Some are very obvious, while others might be a little difficult to identify. The key for us here is to list down and pinpoint the thoughts, feelings and actions that are leading us down the path of self-sabotage. Only then, through conscious self-awareness can we begin to put a stop to these patterns of behavior.

Eliminating Self-Sabotage Process

There is a simple yet very effective process that we can follow to help us eliminate self-sabotage from our lives. The process is comprised of four steps that will help you to take conscious control of the behaviors that are currently directing your decisions and actions.

1. Identify Self-Sabotage Behavior

First we must identify the behavior that is preventing us from moving forward. To do this, we must become consciously aware of our daily decisions and actions and the resulting consequences. Once identified, it's important to pinpoint specific triggers that may be causing this behavior to come through to the surface. These triggers could include people, objects, specific times, events, locations, etc. Next, we must ask ourselves whether we can avoid these triggers altogether? By simply removing these triggers from our lives we will be better prepared to take conscious control of our thoughts, feelings and actions. However, there is yet another factor that we must take into consideration, which is the limiting beliefs we have associated with each particular self-sabotage pattern. The key is to identify these limiting beliefs, then work on transforming them into positive empowering beliefs that work for us rather than against us. One of the simplest ways to do this is the question the validity of your belief. Ask yourself:

- What is it that I believe in this situation?
- What is it that I believe about myself and my own abilities?
- How did my belief about this trigger this self-sabotage pattern?
- How is this belief ridiculous and impractical?
- What would others say about this belief?
- What is another more helpful perspective I could take of this situation?
- These questions are a good starting point and will get you focused in the right direction.

2. Recreate Self-Sabotage Pattern from Beginning

Having completed step #1, you can now consciously recreate the self-sabotage pattern by outlining all the triggers and the associating behaviors that manifest as a result of these triggers. It's important that you are clear how this behavior manifests in your life before moving onto the next step.

3. Identify Healthy Replacement Behavior

In order to eliminate an old pattern of behavior we often must replace it with a new pattern of behavior that's more practical and helpful. This is important because often we simply can't avoid certain triggers such as people, objects or circumstances that cause us to react in limiting ways. As such, we must take time to identify a new, different and appropriate way of responding that will help us to achieve our goals and objectives. Ask yourself:

How could I respond in a more appropriate and proactive manner that would help me get what I want?

How is this a better way to respond?

What are some reasons for making this change?

What could be the long-term benefits of transforming how I respond in this situation?

What are the key advantages of this new behavior?

4. Practice New Behavior Until Habit is Formed

Once you have identified your new behavior, you must now take the time to practice implementing it as often as possible over the next four weeks until a habit is formed. First begin by running your response to the situation in your imagination, seeing every detail, and feeling the positive energy churning through your body as you overcome this self-sabotage pattern. Now that your imagination has been primed, you are now ready to put yourself in situations that will naturally trigger your old patterns of behavior, however this time, you are primed with a new response mechanism that you will continue to practice over the next four weeks until a new habit is finally formed.

Eliminating Self-Sabotage Tips

In order to eliminate self-sabotage patterns from our lives we must make an effort everyday to stay conscious and aware of our behaviors and actions, while implementing a variety of strategies that will help us to eradicate these behaviors from our lives.

Learn from Mistakes

Take time at the end of the day to reflect on how you responded to events and circumstances and learn from these experiences by writing down how you will respond differently in the future.

Think Bigger and Bolder

Sometimes we get so caught up within our self-limiting patterns of behavior because we tend to think in very minuscule ways. We have a narrow focus and just can't seem to see the bigger picture. We must therefore take the time to think bigger and bolder and to expand our understanding and perspective of the situation.

Ask Better Questions

Questions are the keys to the “locks” that hold our problems in place. By asking better and more effective questions, we will be able to gain a different perspective about the situation we find ourselves in. This will likewise help us to become more consciously aware of the self-sabotage patterns that are ruling our lives. Ask yourself:

What have I learned from this experience?

What would I do differently given another chance?

What could the potential benefits be?

How will changing my response allow me to get what I want?

Treat the Process of Change as an Experiment

Just as we didn't master the process of walking in one day, change also doesn't happen overnight. However, it does happen over time. When you first began to take your first steps, you must have stumbled more than once. However, you got back up and continued to struggle until you eventually mastered the process of walking. It was somewhat of an experiment that succeeded in the end. The process of change is exactly the same. Treat it as an experiment and as a process that will take a little time and effort. You will not be victorious overnight, and you might end up losing a few battles. However, in the end if you persist, you will end up winning the war over your self-sabotage patterns.

Seek Advice from Others

It's important to always seek advice from people who have had practical experience dealing with what you're going through. They know from experience the struggles you are likely to face as you try and move beyond your self-sabotage patterns. Therefore, they will most likely be able to give you great practical advice and suggestions that will help you to move beyond the shackles of self-sabotage in quick succession.

Make Plans in Advance

We often struggle through life when we don't know what to expect and have little to-no-idea how circumstances will unfold. However, when we begin to lay out solid plans for the future; solid plans for how we will respond to situations, people, and circumstances, then that's the moment we begin taking control and start moving forward with our lives with proactive momentum. While laying out these plans, always take time to consider possible challenges and obstacles that you might face along this journey. Identify them, then consider how you will respond if they happen to cross your path. And even if you don't deal with them effectively at the time, you will learn and adjust your approach the next time you are confronted with this particular problem or challenge.

Focus on Solutions

Sometimes we get so caught up in our own inadequacies and limitations that all we see are problems and setbacks. This particular way of looking at life and ourselves only leads to further problems and setbacks. Instead, take time to consider possible solutions to the problems you are dealing with. This begins by asking more effective questions that focus you on finding ANSWERS.

Adjust Expectations

Our expectations can sometimes lift us up to new heights, while at other times they can demoralize us emotionally. We must always take time to keep our expectations in-check – to make sure that we are not aiming too high too quickly, otherwise disappointment will result and as a consequence we will fail to find the motivation to change our self-sabotage patterns of behavior. By all means set your expectations high, however at the same time make sure that they are flexible and take into account your circumstances, conditions and resources. Remember, that you didn't master the process of walking in one day. Instead you mastered it over time, just as you will with your own behavior.

Take More Risks

More often than not, those who take more risks have less regrets than those who play it safe and can't handle uncertainty. The same is true when it comes to transforming your behavior. You need to take risks, you need to take a chance on yourself, and you need to finally snap out of old limiting patterns of behavior that will haunt you for the rest of your life. There's no better time to make changes than RIGHT NOW! And there's no one better to start the change than YOURSELF! Don't delay, start the process of change right away.

Take Time for Self-Reflection

In the end, the people who get ahead in life are the ones who actually took the time to think and reflect upon their thoughts, feelings, decisions, behavior and actions. These people learned from what worked or failed to work for them. They eventually adjusted their course by taking a different approach simply because they took the time to reflect-upon what they were doing and the consequences that were manifesting in their lives. Only through self-reflection will you gain the necessary insight, perspective and understanding to begin the process of transformation.



Final Thoughts

Self-sabotage is like a grenade that suddenly explodes in our lives – pushing us away from our deepest wants and desires. However, there are no excuses, because we are the ones who consciously control the movement of the pin. Therefore make a better decision today that you won't fall prey to your self-sabotage patterns ever again.