

## Features

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### Stop self-sabotaging behavior and let yourself get happy

Have you ever gone out of your way to not take care of yourself? Does it ever seem like you're working against yourself? Do you ever ask yourself, "Why did I do that?"

Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines sabotage as "an act or process tending to hamper or hurt" or "deliberate subversion." Why on earth would we sabotage ourselves, then? That's a very complicated question. And yet a simple one. We choose to.

Sometimes it's so frightening to imagine changing, growing or making conscious choices that we deliberately hamper our own efforts. It can be intimidating to know that you make choices every minute of every day and that your life is up to you. And doing things the way we've always done them feels safe and comforting. We may protest that we don't like doing this to ourselves, but still it continues.

To arrive at the best way to stop sabotaging yourself, it is necessary to first understand why it is that you probably do this to yourself time after time. Understand that sabotaging yourself is not the problem. Rather, it's a symptom, or a consequence, of something else, i.e., the real problem that revolves around a hidden, self-limiting thought or feeling.

Common self-limiting thoughts that make us sabotage ourselves include the following:

1. **Focusing on what is not working** or not right (pessimism)
2. **Being stuck in fear** (worrying about the future; taking no action because of fear of what might occur)
3. **Feeling you have no value** (lacking pride in who you are and what you have accomplished; obsessing about past mistakes or perceived failures; criticizing yourself all the time)
4. **Comparing yourself to others** and then feeling bad when compared to them
5. **Meeting goals and then losing them** because you may not feel entitled to what you want
6. **Chasing away relationships** (always feeling that something is missing or always finding fault with people)
7. **Feeling like you have no purpose in life** or reason for being

How can we deal with our self-sabotage? First, take an honest look at how you're sabotaging yourself. For example:

- Do you find that you always go to a particular friend or family member for advice, even though you know that person is always negative and critical? And then, as soon as you ask, you know that you always feel hurt and angry at yourself for asking and at them for being negative.
- Or, you try to lose weight, but as soon as you lose a few pounds, you go to the drive-in for a treat to "reward" yourself. When the pounds return, you hate yourself for being fat and weak. Or, you worry about losing weight because people might not accept you, you might lose friends who are jealous, or maybe you won't be able to keep up the expectation of being slim.
- Or, you really want to exercise after work, but the moment you get home to change clothes, you start thinking of all the other things you "should" do instead.

After you honestly look at your behavior, sit down and do the following:

- Create two columns on a sheet of paper.
- On the left, list the healthy habits that you would like to be doing.
- Now, think about times in your life when you may have tried to implement them. What happened?
- Then, in the right column, next to each healthy habit write down the actions or thoughts that stopped you from doing it or keeping it up.

You now have a list of ways that you may be sabotaging yourself.

The next step is to create your own self-care plan, a list of daily practices to foil your “inner saboteur” and develop the healthy habits that will make you feel more energized, relaxed and balanced. Examples of what you may need to do include learning to forgive yourself for past mistakes and making peace with your past.

Stop trying to find someone to blame for your unhappiness. Learn to say “no” when you are overwhelmed. Speak up for yourself and work at being authentic. Be aware of the thoughts in your head that keep you stuck, and work hard at changing them. Get help from a counselor, join a support group and yell “Stop!” to yourself when your mind races with fear and negativity.

The choice is yours - in any and every moment of your life, you either are in command of yourself or are being commanded by someone else (maybe your own “self-saboteur”?). Which do you choose today?