



Self-sabotage and getting out of Your own way

Ten Steps to Overcoming Self-Sabotage: Health and Lifestyle

A first but important point to mention is that if you have sabotaging behaviours they are not who you are! If you are taking a look at yourself, you are obviously willing and able to make profound changes in your ways of relating so keep it up champ!

The bottom line is: If your actions are not lining up with your deepest truth and ultimate goals when it comes to your self-image or lifestyle, you are in some form of self-sabotage.

Self-handicapping allows people to fail while protecting their sense of self-worth. It's creating an obstacle that provides a built-in excuse and, therefore, allows the individual to deflect the cause of his or her poor performance away from his or her ability.

Bearing this in mind, The Diet Detective, Charles Platkin, PhD, has some of my favourite tips for helping you to overcome your potential for self-sabotage of your diet or lifestyle goals and I'm delighted to share these with you here. I have found these tremendously useful myself:

“1. What do you fear?” Take a sheet of paper and divide it into two columns. Create a list of your fears of losing weight and all the negatives that surround weight loss. Now challenge those fears. For instance, *“People fear that when they change their bodies, they may have to deal with more people being attracted to them, which might threaten an existing relationship,”* says Srini Pillay, M.D., a Harvard researcher and author of *Life Unlocked: 7 Revolutionary Lessons to Overcome Fear* (Rodale, 2010)

2. Think about the future. Picture four specific, positive situations occurring after you achieve your goal. This is called “visualisation” an imagined, meaningful, detailed vision of a specific moment in time after you've reached your goal weight. Think of every emotional and physical detail of these future moments to help you get through the tough times or when you feel you're losing sight of your goal. For example, imagine a thinner, healthier you running into an old friend in town.

3. Set short-term, focused, realistic goals. Sometimes you just need to focus on the task. Don't look too far ahead; just set specific daily, achievable goals. So, if your overall goal is to lose 40 pounds, break that down into specific meals you will be eating, and the exact amount of exercise you'll be doing. For instance, "On Monday I will spend 20 minutes walking to work, 20 minutes walking home, and 20 minutes biking around the park." These goals are not about weight control; they're about what you're going to do that specific day.

4. Make sure all your goals are achievable. While your goals should excite you, they also need to be balanced, realistic and set within an appropriate time frame. Test how realistic a goal is by asking yourself, "Is it under my control?" An achievable goal might be something like: "I'm going to lose 20 pounds over the next 10 months by walking in the morning, replacing fizzy drinks with water, going to a gym once a week to do strength training, and moving more during the day."

How do you know if a goal is achievable? Research reliable sources, consider past experiences and ask others who have achieved similar goals.

5. You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to be perfect to lose weight. Perfectionists may have follow-through, but, at the same time, they might set unrealistic standards that can never be met. If you only have 10 minutes to exercise — that's fine — just do the 10

minutes. A perfectionist often uses this as an excuse to do nothing. "If I can't do a full hour, it's not worth it."

6. Don't wait — do it now! Procrastination hurts. Putting off your intended goal helps to protect you from finding out if you can ever really reach that goal. Start right now. Do not put this off. You don't need to overhaul your entire life. Just put down the doughnut and go for a walk. Saying "I'll start my diet tomorrow" shows that you have the wrong attitude. Your diet-and-fitness program needs to be something you can live with daily, not something you put off because it doesn't happen to be convenient. Even if you fail, at least you'll have started and tried — you're in the game.

7. Get help. Find support from someone with a critical eye. It helps to have someone in your corner, not policing you but making sure you stay on track. This could be a weekly support group, an online buddy, a nutritionist, a personal trainer, a spouse — anyone who can help you realise when you're sabotaging your efforts.

8. Look for patterns. People are creatures of habit, so there's a good chance that you've tried to lose weight before and sabotaged your efforts. Examine your past attempts. As you were getting close to your goal, what happened? Write down what happened each time, and

look for patterns of self-sabotage. Once you find them, come up with a plan to overcome the self-sabotaging behaviour.

9. Use affirming words to describe your actions. Instead of “I can’t.” “I won’t.” “I’ll never be able to...” use words that affirm. Catch yourself the next time you say, “I can’t” and reverse it. As Henry Ford eloquently stated, “Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right.”

These words symbolise and concretise your inner beliefs. You can begin re-patterning your beliefs from the outside in. Work on changing your language to change your mind. Choose empowered, encouraging statements. If you really struggle with a negative inner

dialogue, ask yourself to whom that voice really belongs. Where did it start? A friend? Teacher? Parent?

10. Observe yourself. Imagine you're someone else whose behaviour you're watching. Ask yourself: "What did I do there?" and "What was driving it?" Was it fear, spite, the need to be in control (even if that control is related to making things fail), the need for excitement through conflict, or the desire for attention through sympathy?

What do you sabotage and how? Get to 'know the machine'. Seeing your own behaviour more clearly has nothing to do with over-applied self-blame, but rather being more objective.”

Love Lucy xx

N.B. The information provided here is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between a patient his/her existing doctor