

The 5 Root Causes of Self Sabotage and How to Untangle Them

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“Self-sabotage is when we say we want something and then go about making sure it doesn’t happen.” ~ Alyce P. Cornyn-Selby

Who DOESN'T struggle with some form of indulgence in procrastination, distraction, overwhelm, or self-sabotage from time to time (um... DAILY!)?

No one I've ever met.

We'd be creatively alive, deeply connected with ourselves and others, and just the right amount of productive every second of every day if it weren't for the (mostly unconscious) bad habits that hold us back.

After observing all my own bad habits—my self-saboteur related slips and recoveries—and after all the hundreds of coaching sessions I've facilitated around this topic, I've come to see that, more often than not, we're the ONLY thing standing in the way of our greatest freedom and success.

As for the root causes of the self-sabotage and what to do to untangle them, there is no question. The biggest problems stem from these five behaviors:

1. Too much hustle and not enough self-care and connection.

When our 'love tank' is empty because we've put ourselves last for too long, we won't make clear decisions and we're likely to sabotage even our most precious relationships.

What to do instead:

Stick to consistent baby steps, but make them count. Let go of the rigid, overly sophisticated self-care practices that feel like a chore and instead, commit to doing ONE thing a day to help yourself feel good physically and emotionally. For example:

- Take 3 deep breaths to get grounded.
- Dance to your favorite song.
- Eat one meal slowly with full presence.

Whatever action you take, make it count by simultaneously acknowledging your innermost emotional core (AKA your Inner Child). Picture yourself at around age 5—tender, fun-loving, and attention-hungry—then whisper, “hey... this is just for you... I’ll always do something just for you every day”. As hokey as it may sound, taking this baby step daily, combining the nourishing action with the self-acknowledgment, reinforces the belief that you’re worthy of great love and care AND capable of giving it to yourself. This boosts creative and intuitive abilities and builds massive self-trust and self-assurance.

2. Zooming too far out when setting goals.

When we reach for a ‘Point Z’ instead of a ‘Point B’, we’ll feel pressure, doubt, and overwhelm and won’t know where to start to find relief (much less, generate any momentum).

What to do instead:

Zoom in to your true ‘Point B’. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had someone describe to me their ‘Point B’ (where they’re aiming to get to in their lives within 3-6 months),

and it's such a crammed picture that even hearing it is overwhelming. It's no wonder they feel incapable of breaking their vision down into doable, bite-sized pieces and action steps. And yet, to get any traction, that's exactly what has to be done. If you ever slip into this behavior, stop and ask yourself:

- “What would a little bit of improvement look and feel like?”
- “What needs to happen first to bring relief and remove some pressure?”
- “How can I scale my vision back, and back, and back some more... so far back that it feels doable, simple, and clear... like I can begin to take action on it NOW?”

That should be the content of a true Point B, nothing more.

3. Blending work time with leisure time.

Without clear time boundaries, we'll feel as though we're living in the 'grey zone'—foggy, unproductive, and probably guilty too.

What to do instead:

A. When you're working, work. Don't do the 'grass is greener' thing or crack out on Facebook. And don't spend all day every day doing the easy projects while completely avoiding the challenging ones that are actually higher priority. Hold your Point B vision in mind as you tackle highest priorities first, and as a rule of thumb, ONLY do activities that directly generate income or build your career from right where you are. Even if you're not currently in a career you love, try to love the shit out of it while you do all that you can every day during your work hours to rock your current position.

Wallace D. Wattles, in his classic book, *The Science of Getting Rich*, describes this way of operating as “more than filling your present place”, and says that it cultivates magnetism and creates “the impression of increase” right where you are. It fuels you to add more value and “create increase” in all that you do. It makes you more attractive, more indispensable, more inspiring—and all of these qualities will only increase momentum towards your Point B, even if your Point B feels unrelated to your current roles and routines. When you arrive at your Point B, Voila! It becomes your Point A... then clarity, evolution, and momentum continue as you create a new Point B vision and take consistent baby steps to move towards it.

B. When you're NOT working, DON'T work. Visualize. Play. Savor. Chop vegetables. Eat with friends. Nap. Dance. Nourish yourself and unplug best you can.

4. Resisting like crazy because we're believing our own made-up stories.

When we make meaning that fills us with stress or hold a judgment or perspective that puts us at war with ourselves, with others, or with reality as it currently is, we rob ourselves of our power, joy, and presence. Until we're willing to question these stories and tease apart assumptions from factual truths, we cannot be free.

What to do instead: (*This one's a doozy, and it's super counterintuitive, but hang with me... it's the crux!)

A. First things first: Recognize that you are resisting, then be your own best 'vent buddy' and let yourself feel... don't edit. Be like that Godsend of a friend who's always willing to hear you vent HONESTLY—f-bombs, finger pointing and all. Meet

yourself where you are and give yourself full permission to feel exactly what you feel. Don't try to be happier or more aware. That's too big of a jump right now and it will just feel fake. (Then you'd be more like that irritating friend who always tries to coach you and tell you how to be more positive, rather than just loving you as you are and giving you room to have whatever experience you're having in the moment).

Breathe to feel your current feeling more and just STAY, without editing, censoring, or reaching for a different feeling. Note: If you try to force a feeling of acceptance—or worse, gratitude—when you're REALLY feeling like you want to PUNCH something (or someone), the resistance will only grow stronger, you won't feel like you're honoring yourself, and you won't like the choices you make from that place. So the first (and probably the HARDEST) step is to just take a moment and feel whatever is there. Then the 'energy in motion' (the e-motion) can naturally work its way out. You can also help it along if you:

- Shadowbox your face off (even better if you do it to loud music).
- Curl into a ball on the floor and weep.
- Scream into a pillow or go for a fierce sprint down the road.
- Yell “GET OUT!” over and over again, from deep inside your gut.

(If you're in a public place and you don't want to scare people or make them call the crazy people police to come and lock you up, try just closing your eyes and vividly imagining yourself doing any of the above).

Do whatever you have to to let yourself acknowledge and feel what's alive in you so that the energy can move. Once it does,

and you're feeling some relief—you're a little less in your head and a little more in your body—trace the bad feelings back to their origin: the stories and judgements you were spinning that caused you to feel so shitty. Gently own up to the fact that you are the author of the stories and hence, the resulting discomfort—and this is GOOD NEWS because it means you can change it.

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