



Signs that you are sabotaging yourself at work

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Have you ever been at the point where you are just about to reach a goal, or have a dream come true at work? You have made it through every step so far and success is almost in your reach. And then suddenly you make a really silly mistake and blow it, and don't achieve that goal or dream that was within your reach. Most of us have experienced situations like this, and it happens because we are sabotaging ourselves.

Self-sabotage is when we consciously or unconsciously act to prevent ourselves from reaching a goal. It is immensely frustrating, makes us lose motivation to pursue any further goals, and happens because, at some level, whether we are aware of it or not, we fear the consequences of achieving the final result. Although we think the goal is everything we want, at some level we perceive some pain attached to achieving the outcome, and so we will go so far to achieve our goal and then stop just short of attaining it.



There are a number of reasons that have been proposed as to why we might self-sabotage. Below are some of them. Read them and think about them. See if any apply to you.

1. We have low self-esteem. With low self-esteem we believe we are not worth the best in life, and therefore not worthy of achieving our goals. As human beings, we always act to support our beliefs about ourselves. If you think little of yourself, you will sabotage success, because succeeding is incongruent with the beliefs you have about yourself.
2. We fear failure. No goal is achieved without experiencing many failures along the road. It is impossible to be successful without a lot of failure along the way. If you fear failure you are trapped where you are because your fear of failure will stop you doing anything to move ahead. Failure is a step on the path to success, it is not a sign that you will not be successful. If your fear of failure is so intense you will never try anything.
3. We fear success. Yes, some people do. Achieving your goal may put you in the spotlight and that scares you. Achieving your goal may mean people will expect more and more of you in the future and that is not something you can deal with. Achieving your goal may mean more responsibility, and you are scared of more responsibility.
4. We have an overwhelming need to always be in control and cannot deal with any amount of uncertainty. In most cases there is no 100% guarantee that your goals will be achieved. People who are terrified of uncertainty need to know that the outcome is certain. And so they won't push themselves to go for something unless the result is certain. And for the most part, no result is a given.
5. We procrastinate. We put off doing what needs to be done. Unless you take action and do what needs to be done, you are not going to reach your goals. Doing nothing, or avoiding what needs to be done, is going to leave you right where you are now.
6. We have "imposter syndrome". We feel we are not capable of functioning at the level we desire to be at and believe that if placed at that level we will be shown to be incompetent.
7. We are not able to delay gratification. This means that immediate rewards matter most to us and we will only go after a goal that is immediately achievable. Most goals require time and working through challenges to be achieved.
8. We think self-defeating thoughts and have unhealthy thought patterns. This is related to point 1, but you can still have reasonably good self-esteem and self-sabotaging thoughts. You may have good self-esteem but believe that you will never make it to a senior manager level. You may have good self-esteem and believe you cannot succeed in a position that requires technical knowledge. We act to make our beliefs come true (this is the self-fulfilling prophecy) and if you think you are not good at a specific subject, you are not leadership material, you are not worth the salary of a senior level job, you will act to make your negative beliefs come true. You need to have beliefs that support your goals if you want them to become a reality.
9. We are world-class critics. Some people grow up in environments that are very critical and they themselves learn to criticise anything and everything. Some people work in environments that find fault with everything. If you are extremely critical you are going to talk yourself out of reaching everything that you are capable of.
10. We are impulsive and reactive. That is, we don't think things through, we just act without fully thinking through the consequences of our actions. If you do that you are likely to find yourself chopping and changing goals all the time. You will start the journey towards a goal and halfway through decide that you would like something else, and so change your goal. It's fine to change a goal if it's the wrong one for you. But some people are always changing their minds about what they want to do and never complete anything.
11. We are not good at dealing with challenges. To achieve anything worthwhile is hard. Some people, from childhood, have learned that, and so persist when the going gets tough. Other people have a habit of giving up or have experienced others stepping in and taking over when things are difficult, and

so have not learned what it is like to persist when things are tough. If you are completely overwhelmed and thrown by setbacks, to the point that you quit, you will not achieve your goals.

12. We are perfectionists. Perfectionism is not a good thing. In fact it is usually an anxiety response. If everything has to be perfect and you have to be sure you will be perfect at anything before you go for it, you will stop yourself from reaching your potential. You simply will not go for goals that could challenge you and result in growth for you.
13. We like being in a comfort zone. If you like things being easy and comfortable (and who doesn't at least some of the time), you will never push yourself. You will say no to great opportunities.
14. We see the negative side of things much more often than the positive. You only see problems and not solutions. You only see how much more still lies ahead rather than seeing how far you have already come. Such a mindset tends to be demotivating, and makes it more likely we will stop before we reach our goal.
15. We worry we might be disloyal to friends or family. If you achieve that goal perhaps you might outshine your parents or move ahead of your friends, and we can't deal with that. So we rather do not achieve the goal and ensure we stay on good terms with our family and friends.
16. We set the bar too high or overcommit ourselves. While some people are concerned that they are not capable of much, others think they can do anything, and within a short period of time. They don't have a realistic expectation of what it will take to reach their goal. As they work towards the goal their expectations are dashed and they give up.
17. You are burned out, over-stressed, have clinical anxiety or depression. These are medical conditions that can stop you from reaching your goals. If you have any of these then forget about reaching goals for a time. You need rest and you need to get medical treatment.

That's quite a long list, and there are most likely some others that can be added. Given that life can be very difficult, that many goals are only attained after facing and overcoming obstacles that have pushed us to our limits, it's quite sobering to realise that we can also make things even more difficult for ourselves than they need be. To do life well we need to be growing in awareness of ourselves and the ways in which we get in our own way. Because we do get in our own way. If you are battling to overcome learned patterns that sabotage you, then consider getting help from a life coach or therapist.

As human beings, we love to point fingers at other people and blame. We want our misfortunes to be the fault of others. Often, they are not. If we had to look at our own worst enemy, we would find that person in the mirror looking back at us.