

# Why do people self-sabotage?

**SUMAIYA RASHID**

Do you ever get the feeling that you are actually two people? One is motivated to succeed and the other is holding you back like an anchor stuck between rocks? Do you ever feel unworthy of all that you have done in life, as if you are a constant lie that people can't see through? If you can honestly reply no, you are one of those rare people who are so sure of themselves, their goals, and their methods that they usually never have to worry about self-sabotage.

Self-sabotage, unfortunately, is an all-too-common human shortcoming, and many of us have fallen victim to it at least occasionally. If not, you may have seen a friend at some point in your life and thought to yourself, "He/she is ruining his/her own life."

When you consciously or unconsciously sabotage yourself, it can have adverse effects on your goals and general wellbeing. Even if there are several reasons why someone could self-sabotage, it doesn't always happen in the same way. Self-sabotage may take many different forms and the way it manifests depends on the individual. A few of the primary causes of people's propensity for self-sabotage include fear of failure, low self-esteem, cognitive dissonance, difficulty/discomfort with change, anxiety, and a need for control.

Procrastination, or delaying something and coming up with excuses, is a common example of self-sabotaging behaviour. Excuses are used to try to rationalise an unnecessary delay that keeps you from achieving a goal. This can result in people intentionally avoiding a commitment to partake in some other activity, even if they find themselves doing things that result in the opposite of what they initially wanted.

Procrastination is not the only way self-sabotaging behaviour manifests. A common scenario is when you end up setting

unreasonable standards for yourself and begin to mistrust or second-guess yourself frequently. If you wind up creating unrealistic expectations for yourself, perfectionism may also lead to self-destruction.

To avoid dealing with uncomfortable emotions or dwelling on previous trauma, some subconscious self-saboteurs may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance abuse. On the outside, self-saboteurs may wear a strong and cheerful face to conceal their emotional vulnerability. However, when others approach them in an attempt to develop connections, these individuals could get hostile.

Defensive self-saboteurs could have trouble being in the moment and end up pushing others away in order to prevent being emotionally damaged. The self-sabotaging state of mind compels them to act in a way that validates their notion that they don't deserve anything better.

Failure to achieve desired targets or results can exacerbate poor self-esteem or beliefs by causing or worsening depression, anxiety, self-doubt, and helplessness. The key to preventing self-destructive habits is being more conscious of one's triggers. Once you've identified areas where you might be tempted to self-sabotage, such as a huge assignment at home or entering into a healthy relationship after a traumatic one, you can concentrate on monitoring your thoughts and behaviours and steering yourself away from sabotage.

**Reference:**

IJSER.org (January, 2017). *To Study the Self-Sabotaging Etiquette in concordance with Criminality*

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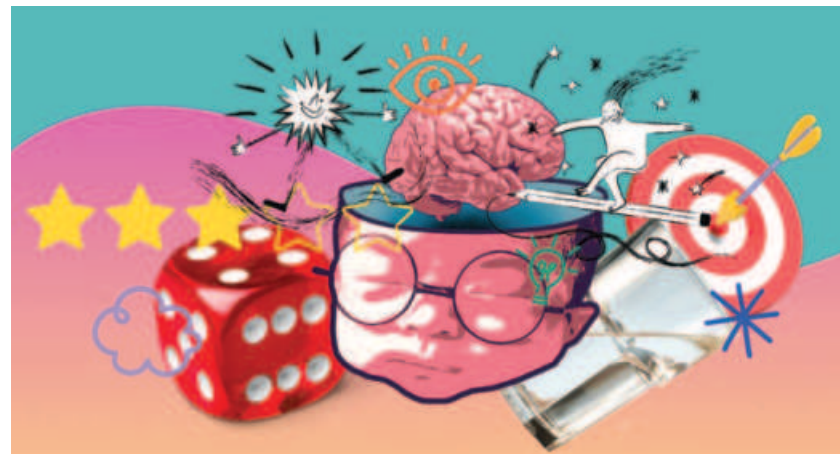


ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

## Don't think realistically, think with balance instead

**FABIHA AFIFA**

Until roughly two hours months ago, I was a proud, lifelong realist. No glass was half-full or half-empty; it was only ever a glass of water. But now, my days of thinking realistically are over.

I've realised that realistic thoughts entail the possibility of failure. No one, including myself, has ever told me, "Think realistically. You could get what you want." Instead, it's always been, "Think realistically, and prepare a plan B."

In other words, the reality being discussed was always about me missing the mark with a backup plan figured out. It never once occurred to me that realistically, there's an equal chance of me achieving my goals, assuming I tried my best and the odds weren't entirely against me.

Of course, a lot of this has to do with my perception of luck and success. Some people might be very comfortable with believing that success is something out of the ordinary while failure is more grounded in reality, but I personally find that a tad harsh. I like to think there's always the element of unpredictability that can change the course of things. There's been plenty of times I won when I was least expecting it, and lost when I thought I had a fair chance of winning. That being said, the contest between luck and effort is simply too obscure to figure out, which is why I've found an easy fix to my dilemma: I've decided to have balanced thoughts from now onwards.

My concept is simple and based on the idea that unless there's a major obstruction in my path, I'll always have equal chances of winning and losing. There's no room for dire statistics here. However, in case things go awry, I'll have alternate plans ready as always. It's just that I'll no longer think that failure is far more realistic than success.

I can see how the whole concept of having balanced thoughts can seem too cushioned to some people. Perhaps they find more ease in knowing their "realistic" chances of getting to their goals, or perhaps it's knowing something beyond them can determine the result that scares them. Either way, I think for people like me, who've subconsciously always had a sense of unease with the narrative that reality is usually conducive to failure, the practice of having balanced thoughts can be very helpful. It allows us to still take into account the possibility of failure, but it never feels like resignation before even trying. It also gives us the chance to work on our flaws without being too hard on ourselves. By no longer assuming reality is mostly directed towards failure, there's a feeling of wanting to do even better every time, and an eagerness to learn from past mistakes.

But as with most things in life, it all depends on the person. There's no fool-proof method to make everyone feel equally motivated and confident in their abilities and future, and it's all about trying out new mindsets before finding out one that yields the best results. For me, though, thinking with balance is the way to go now.

*Fabiha just found out she's actually the heir apparent of Dorne. Renew your allegiance to her at [afifafabiha01@gmail.com](mailto:afifafabiha01@gmail.com)*



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