



# SABOTAGE



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## SABOTAGE SYNDROME

### WHAT IS THE SABOTAGE SYNDROME?

We use the word sabotage all of the time, but do you really know what it means? By definition, sabotage means to destroy. Therefore, when it comes to weight loss, the sabotage syndrome is any deliberate or unconscious thought, feeling, or behavior that attempts to destroy your ability to achieve your weight loss goals. There are two common forms of sabotage in weight loss: self-sabotage and assisted sabotage.

### WHAT IS SELF-SABOTAGE?

Self-sabotage is when you destroy your own ability to achieve your weight loss goals by working toward goal, then retracting from it. Most commonly, your own mind becomes your biggest enemy and your thoughts begin to severely affect your behaviors. For example, when you start your diet, you have a positive attitude, feel motivated, and believe "I can do this." Over time, something happens and your belief "I can do this" is replaced by "I can't do this" or "This is too hard." Or, your initial thought "I can change" is overridden by "I'm unable to change." It is this ambivalent and harmful attitude toward yourself that causes you to unconsciously do everything in your power to destroy your new healthy lifestyle.

### WHAT IS ASSISTED SABOTAGE?

Have you ever noticed that there is usually one person in every crowd who tries to destroy your diet? It almost seems as if every time you are on track, they are right there offering you a doughnut, some chips, pizza, or even an extra serving of an unhealthy food they know you are trying to avoid? These people are known as **"food pushers"** and are attempting assisted sabotage.

*Some examples of assisted sabotage:*

- As you are losing weight, out of nowhere, a co-worker who knows you are avoiding sweets offers you a doughnut.
- A friend, who knows you are watching your weight, begs you to share a pizza or a slice of cake.
- While sitting on the couch watching television, your husband who know you trying to lose weight, rips open a bag of chips in front of you and asks, "want some?"

# SELF SABOTAGE

## REASONS FOR SELF-SABOTAGE

Why do you work so hard to diet, lose weight, and get healthy only to destroy your own efforts? It would seem foolish that after eating healthfully and balanced for a significant period of time you would binge on a dessert or a fattening meal. Even as you are consuming the unhealthy food, you know you should not be eating it, but you just cannot stop.

There are several reasons why self-sabotage tends to linger in our lives. Most often, it is due to a lack of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-worth, and/or self-belief. Negative thoughts about yourself and your ability to lose weight can undermine your weight loss efforts. The messages you give yourself through your conscious or unconscious self-talk have a powerful ability to affect your feelings, behaviors, and results.

You can also suffer from self-sabotaging behavior because you are unable to effectively manage your emotions. This is otherwise known as emotional eating. For example, you rely on food to cope with stress, anger, sadness, boredom, loneliness, and/or any other negative emotion. Interestingly, emotional eating is also triggered by positive emotions. This occurs when you eat in response to feeling happy and/or excited. For some, self-sabotage becomes the go to technique for coping with challenging situations, the hassles of daily life, major life events, or unrealistic expectations of ourselves, which we subconsciously feel we are incapable of reaching. Nevertheless, whatever emotions drive you to eat, the outcome is the same...your feelings return, and you likely bear the additional burden of guilt regarding sabotaging your weight-loss.

Another reason for self-sabotage may be because you have a (conscious or unconscious) fear of being deprived. For example, you are hosting a birthday celebration and serving ice cream and cake. You really want to stick to your meal plan, but watching everyone else eat the goodies makes you feel left out and deprived. So, what do you do? Sabotage! You either indulge with your guests, or wait for them to leave and sneak into the kitchen and binge on the cake and/or ice cream.

Additionally, fearing failure may cause you to self-sabotage. This usually occurs because you see failure "the worst thing in the world" or as evidence of how inadequate you (subconsciously) believe you are.

Regardless of your reasons for self-sabotage, if you do not stop it, you will continue living a life full of disappointments, regrets, and unfulfilled expectations.

## 8 SIGNS YOU ARE SELF-SABOTAGING

1. Negative Thinker - Focusing only on the negative and ignoring the positive (ex. I lost 3 pound BUT I still have 25 to go.)
2. Fear of failure (ex. "I'm going to fail.")
3. Closet Eater - Eating in secret
4. Negative Self-talker - Beating yourself up (ex. "I am fat, ugly, not good enough, etc.")
5. The Saint or Sinner Mentality - Expecting perfection {ex. "I have to eat perfectly otherwise I've failed, so might as well eat what ever I want the rest of the day."}
6. Emotional Eater – (ex. "I am so stressed out, I need to eat \_\_\_\_\_ (sweets, chips, pizza, etc.)")
7. Focusing on the past – doom and gloom (self-defeating behaviors) (ex. "I have never been able to lose weight and keep it off, so I won't be able to do it this time.")
8. The Chicken Little Syndrome – the sky is falling! (ex. "I have so much weight to lose, I'm never going to be able to do it.")
9. The Excuse Factory - Making excuses for not eating healthy or exercising (ex. "I'm too tired, busy, or stressed out." "It's too hard!" "It is my birthday, so I must have cake." "My aunt made it, so I have to eat it." "I have a slow metabolism, I'll never lose weight.")

## 3 STEPS TO STOP SELF-SABOTAGE

### 1. Identify the self-sabotaging thoughts and behaviors

In order to create change, you will first need to become aware of what it is that is preventing you from moving forward and attaining your desired weight loss goals. Do you have cruel and punitive self-talk? Are you aware that you are emotionally eating? Are you using food to tolerate the hassles of daily life? Do you suffer from low self-esteem, and/or currently hold the belief that you are going to fail again? Are you using food as a reward or as a way to celebrate? It is important to become aware of your daily thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and their subsequent consequences. Listen to what you say to yourself about losing weight. Make a list of all of your thoughts and behaviors that are currently sabotaging your weight loss.

# SELF SABOTAGE (CONT.)

## 3 STEPS TO STOP SELF-SABOTAGE (CONT.)

### 2. Replace it with new positive thoughts and/or a new way of responding

Once you have identified the thoughts and behaviors that are in your way, you can now make the necessary changes to help you succeed. If your negative thoughts are in your way, it is time to create more positive ones. Stop being your own worst enemy and become your own cheerleader. Look for opportunities to create alternative positive messages. For example, when you hear yourself say, "I can't do this" replace it with "I will find a way." If you say, "I am going to fail again" replace it with "this time is different." Notice how your new healthier self-talk makes you feel better and more motivated, which propels you to make healthier choices. Repeat these positive self talk message often. Within time, you will start to believe them and you will see the results you desire!

*Self-Talk Yourself to Success!*

- I am capable of change!
- I can lose weight and keep it off!
- I can tolerate my feelings without relying on food!
- I can learn to love healthy foods!
- I am worth it!
- I deserve to feel good and be healthy!
- This time is different!

If it is your behavior that you need to focus on, you need to replace it with more effective ways of responding that will help you achieve your weight loss goals.

To begin, ask yourself these questions:

- How could I respond in a more appropriate and effective manner that would help me achieve my weight loss goals?
- What are some reasons for making this change?
- Why is this important to me?
- What are the long-term benefits of transforming how I respond in this situation?
- What are the advantages of practicing this new behavior?

### 3. Practice your new thoughts and behaviors

Once you have outlined your new thoughts and behaviors, it is now time to implement and practice them. Research suggests you can change almost anything (including thoughts and behaviors) in 21-66 days. So start practicing NOW!

Take time at the end of each day to reflect on how you responded to events and circumstances. Learn from your mistakes, as mistakes are excellent opportunities to learn about yourself. If possible, don't beat yourself up when you make a mistake. Try to say something nice to yourself and learn from each experience. Continue to adjust how you may respond differently in the future.

# ASSISTED SABOTAGE

## REASONS FOR ASSISTED SABOTAGE

There are several reasons why your "so-called" helpers are attempting to sabotage your progress. The most common reason is they feel jealous and guilty. You are losing weight and getting in shape and they are not. Tempting you with beckoning foods to "fall off the wagon" means you are normal again and they can feel comfortable and guard the "status quo."

Another reason may be because they miss the old you. Co-workers miss the baked goods you used to bring to work or the "happy hours" you used to previously attend. Or, your spouse or significant other may miss eating out with you or sharing desserts. When you are living a healthy lifestyle you change (for the better), therefore, your relationships may change and your helpers begin to miss the old you.

Moreover, sometimes the people in our lives associate food with love. As such, if you are no longer eating what loved ones have prepared, they may feel as if you do not love them as much or they are not as important to you.

Less frequently, a reason for assisted sabotage may be the saboteur really doesn't know what they are doing. Maybe they have never had a weight problem and they think it is ridiculous for you to be concerned about what you eat. Maybe your helpers just aren't thinking and do not know how to give support?

Regardless of the reasons, you want people in your life to support and encourage you. Learn how to identify an assisted saboteur and begin to defend against diet saboteurs.

# ASSISTED SABOTAGE (CONT.)

## SIGNS OF ASSISTED SABOTAGE

Learn how to identify when others are attempting to prevent you from your weight loss goals. Below are a few signs that can indicate assisted sabotage:

- Making remarks like:
  - "You have to try this"
  - "One bite won't hurt."
  - "You look too skinny."
  - "Everyone deserves to spurge once in a while."
  - "It's your birthday, you have to have some cake."
  - "There is one cookie left, do you want it?"
  - "You are not as much fun since you have lost weight!"
  - "We are on vacation, have some!"
  - "What, my lasagna is not good enough for you anymore?"
- Repeatedly giving you gifts of chocolate, candy, or other fat laden foods.
- Insisting on having "their foods" around to include chips, sweets, and high caloric foods.
- Encouraging you to go back to old eating patterns so you may experience "togetherness."
- Becoming jealous when your new body shape gets attention

## DEFEND YOURSELF AGAINST ASSISTED SABOTAGE

Before you get angry and defensive, try to give saboteurs the benefit of the doubt. Maybe they truly don't know what they are doing.

However, when it is obvious that someone is getting in the way of your success, use these techniques to prepare for the pushers!

### • **Just say NO!**

For some, this may be the hardest thing to do. I want to let you know it is ok for you to just say "No, thank you!" You do not have to say anything else. In fact, you do not owe them an explanation. They may continue to pressure you, so continue to say, "no, thank you" repeatedly until they get the message.

If you typically feel guilty after saying no to someone, you most likely suffer from the "disease to please." The "disease to please" may be making you overweight; So, I am giving you permission to throw out your guilt! You have the right to say no!

### • **Give an explanation**

If just saying, "No, thank you" is too difficult, try giving an honest explanation as to why you are choosing to avoid what they are offering. Some examples include:

- "Thank you for offering me \_\_\_\_\_. I would really like to eat that, but I'm following my meal plan and I am feeling great. Improving my health is important to me because I want to be healthier not only for me but for my family, as well."
- "No thank you. My doctor said I must lose weight."
- "No, thank you. I have already eaten."
- "Not right now. I will be eating shortly and I do not want to spoil my appetite."
- "Not just yet, I am going to wait for a little while."

### • **Take it and leave it**

Another option is to take the food and say thank you...BUT, wrap it up and either give it away or throw it out!

I know the thought of wasting food is hard for many of you. Especially if you were taught that there were starving children in some far away country. Or, maybe some of you were forced to be members of the clean your plate club. Nevertheless, you do not have to follow these rules any longer. In fact, these rules may be the very reason you are overweight!

