

DREAM BIG

Have you ever had the experience of setting a goal but then found yourself doing the exact thing that would prevent you from achieving it?

There are a number of reasons why this happens – an obvious one being that the goal is unrealistic and hard to obtain and/or maintain. But another reason worth considering is the notion of self-sabotage.

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

Of course, people seldom mean to sabotage themselves; it’s not generally a conscious decision to spoil things, which is why we can be left with the feeling: “Why, oh why, do I do this to myself?”

So what’s going on? Different people say different things about this. Psychotherapist Carl Jung believed that our lives need meaning and purpose. If we don’t have meaning and purpose, we acquire a bad habit in order to create drama and excitement – so we feel like there’s something interesting and entertaining happening in our life – even if it’s a bad, exciting thing. Jung’s name for these patterns of behaviour is low-level spiritual quests.

We all know people who have to create drama no matter what kind it is (I heard someone once refer to them as the “crazy makers”). Although their behaviour can sabotage things left, right and centre, they are merely trying to add a bit of spice to life so that it gives them some sort of meaning and purpose.

Another idea is that we sabotage

Our dreams can become realities if we can just stop getting in our own way, writes Fiona Hoban

“It seems that all sabotaging behaviour is an attempt either to give us a sense of meaning or to protect us in some way

things when our desired goals are out of alignment with our internal thought processes and beliefs. This is known as incongruence – the inner doesn’t match the outer. For example, if you have a desired goal to be a successful writer but deep down hold a belief that you are not worthy of success, then, chances are, you will unconsciously sabotage your attempts to achieve success. Because it’s not done consciously, you may use conscious justification: “I have no discipline. I have no time. I have no support.”

This idea of incongruence is similar to the concept of masochistic equilibrium. This term is used by *Oprah* columnist Karen Salmansohn to explain how and why a person’s comfort zone is sometimes to stay in discomfort. She says that, basically, you grew up in your childhood learning to feel comfy with only a certain level of happiness. Maybe you grew up used to 80% happiness or maybe just 17%. When this concentration shifts – even if it’s upwards – you will then start to feel twitchy because this new zone feels so unfamiliar. As a result, you might instinctively want to do something self-sabotaging so you can shift your happiness concentration back down, down, down, down to your familiar zone – your masochistic equilibrium. Or you might simply choose situations right from the start which bring you a familiar level of

pain, so as to match the masochistic equilibrium you grew up with. As the saying goes, you attract what you are.

And there’s more. Many sabotaging behaviours and habits are subconscious attempts to deal with a deeper self-sabotage – one you may not realise exists. Using the example of wanting to be a successful writer, you may not feel you are worthy of success and, therefore, justify why you cannot write.

You may use sabotaging behaviours such as drinking or eating to distract you from your desired goal. But behind this again may be a deeper layer, a deeper fear. What would happen if you did achieve your goal? This can actually terrify people. And therein lies the root cause of the sabotaging behaviour.

I once had a client who sabotaged her health by overeating. But behind this sabotage lay a fear that if she stopped overeating she might lose weight, and if she lost weight she might attract male attention. Male attention made her feel very vulnerable so she needed to self-sabotage as a means of protection. She wasn’t sabotaging her health because she didn’t feel worthy of being healthy, she was sabotaging her health in order to feel safe.

So it seems that all sabotaging behaviour is an attempt either to give us a sense of meaning or to protect us in some way. Self-sabotage is really about self-preservation. Realising this is the first step to recovery. 🌟