

## Ep #223: Self-Sabotage



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With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

## Ep #223: Self-Sabotage

Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems, and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Well hello there, my friends. How are you guys? Today is an amazing day. I know I always say that. I joined this entrepreneurial organization group and they make fun of how many times I say amazing. But it's okay because I am amazing and life is amazing and it's okay to say amazing a lot of the time. So amazing, there you go, y'all.

So today, we are going to talk about self-sabotage and I see this up close with so many of my clients, my employees, my friends and it's like a syndrome. It's the craziest thing and people don't understand it, right. They're like, "Why am I sabotaging myself all of the time?"

And the way I want you to think about self-sabotage is I want you to make sure that you're putting that in the A-line of your model. So that would be in the action line of your model. Self-sabotage is a way that we react to our emotions and it's really important that we understand it. A lot of us want to put self-sabotage in the circumstance line, as if it's something that we do to ourselves that we don't have any control over; that we're not actually doing. It's kind of like it's happening to us by us, but we don't have control over it.

And so that's like the first really big shift that you need to make is really owning that self-sabotage is a choice and it's a choice you're making on purpose so you can feel differently. And just like any kind of buffering, just like anything that gets in our way of our fullest potential, there's a payoff in the short-term that we're exchanging for the ultimate payoff in the long-term.

So self-sabotage is defined as creating unnecessary problems for one's self, interfering with your own goals. I love that definition because if you think about all these long-term goals that you have for yourself, those are all created in your prefrontal cortex. Those are all created with the highest

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level of your humanity and your imagination and your creativity as a human being.

So one of the best things that we do as human beings is set goals. That's one of our highest levels of activities. The second highest level of activity is to manage ourselves to fulfill those goals.

So we are able, with our prefrontal, to plan ahead. We're able to create goals out a week, a month, years, decades out in front of us and then we are able to commit to those beliefs and those goals and follow through on them. That is the privilege, I believe, of being a human being.

So when we use that highest part of ourselves when we access our highest level of functioning as a human and we create a goal for ourselves, that's really something we should honor, I believe, because it's such a privilege to be able to do that. And yet so many of us set those goals and then we interfere with our own progress. We interfere with our progress towards completing those goals.

And one of the ways that many people do it is with procrastination, putting off the activities that would put us towards those goals, because we're afraid we might fail or we're afraid that we won't get the result we want right away. So many of us spend so much time buffering and seeking those false pleasures and that really interferes with our progress towards our goals. It interferes with our actions towards our goals.

So many times, we put in that A-line, the self-sabotaging behaviors of buffering, which is overeating, overdrinking, over-Facebooking, overspending, over-Netflixing; whatever it is you do when you had planned on working towards your goal. Not showing up is another way. This used to be a big one for me when I was younger.

I would make appointments and set up time with friends, set up events to go to and I just wouldn't show up. I wouldn't even call. I just wouldn't show up. I was in such a self-sabotaging spiral that I just didn't show up for anyone and I certainly didn't show up in my own life.

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And another way that we sabotage is we quit. It's not going fast enough, so we quit. Let me make a suggestion; that will not make it go faster. So the problem with self-sabotage, for many of us, is that we get into the habit of it. So we have these models that perpetuate self-sabotage and they're just constantly negative spin cycles that are interfering with all of the goals that we set for ourselves. Many of us stop setting those goals because we know that we have the habit of self-sabotage and so we just do it ahead of time by not even setting any goals.

I think that's when so many of my clients come to me at that point and it's such a shame because this is something that is very undoable, this self-sabotage spiral. And in fact, it's very normal for human beings to interfere with their own progress because of the way that the brain is wired for pleasure and comfort. But you also have the ability, as a human, to understand that tendency and to override it and to hack it.

So there' three main things that you can kind of look at yourself to see if you're in this spiral of self-sabotage. The first one is – like, a lot of people say to me, “Well I don't ever sabotage myself.” And I'll say, “What are your goals right now?” And they won't have any. And I'll say, “Well there it is.”

That is the ultimate in self-sabotage, not planning your future, not owning the future as your property. That is the first indicator. And again, most people don't do that because they don't want to be disappointed by their own self-sabotage, so they just sabotage everything ahead of time by not setting goals.

The second thing is a lack of awareness, meaning you're not even aware of your life enough to know if you're sabotaging yourself, and that's key. When I sit down with clients and I'm talking to them about their patterns of self-sabotage and they are consistently saying they don't know, that's just a lack of taking a look, let's call it – not taking a look at what's going on in your own life, not paying attention, not noticing your own patterns of action, patterns of feeling, patterns of thinking.

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And the third indicator that is really evident is really that past focused energy; focusing on the things that you did accomplish in the past or focusing on all of your failures from the past and using them as a reason not to move forward. So the question really becomes, like, how do we overcome this. And it's just like anything else, right.

We have to really look into – I don't know if you guys can hear that, but my dog is like squeezing the tennis squeaky ball so loud. It's so crazy, he's so cute. I'm hoping you guys can't hear it. I'm just going to keep going. So what happens is we have these belief systems about ourselves and we believe that we are capable of a certain thing and we believe that we will or won't achieve a certain goal. And if we have a lot of doubt or we have a lot of frustration or we have a lot of discomfort associated with a goal, our end result will be the effect of self-sabotage.

So we will do one of those things that I talked about, procrastinate, buffer, not show up or quit as a way of self-sabotaging, which will perpetuate this idea that we're not capable, that we're not worthy, that we can't figure out how to do something, that we were never going to get that goal anyway. And those habits perpetuate because they become part of our identity. We don't even recognize that we are having these thoughts about ourselves; that we're only capable of a certain amount.

So you might listen to one of my podcasts or you might come to one of my classes and I'll encourage you to think bigger, think the impossible, think something amazing for yourself, which you have every right as a human being to do. But when you do, when you set those big goals for yourself, you also still have all of these patterns that you may or may not be aware of that will prevent you from achieving that, unless you do the work on those thoughts.

So a big one that many of us have is, I'm not worthy. I'm not worthy of that goal. I'm not worthy of that result or I'm not capable of it. I'm not smart enough. And you have to deconstruct that model. You have to, first of all, become aware of it. You have to understand how it's creating this self-

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sabotage, and then you have to deconstruct it and decide on purpose to do something different.

So all of the work that we've done on buffering in this podcast, and for those of you who are in Scholars, that we've done in Scholars, that's exactly the process that we do. We start paying really close attention to everything that leads up to that buffering, and then we have a plan for it. We plan for the urges. We plan for the emotions. We plan on how we are not going to be giving in to the things that create the self-sabotage.

So the first thing that we really need to do is take control of our emotional management. And that's really a collection of all of the lessons of this podcast, but I'll summarize them here. We need to become aware of what we're feeling. We need to learn how to process emotion and we need to understand that about half of the time, those emotions are going to be uncomfortable and that does not mean something has gone wrong. In fact, it means we're human and it means we're growing and it means we're evolving.

So we have to be careful not to get caught in the trap that life should be comfortable all the time or that we should be happy all the time because, ironically, that's what leads to the self-sabotage. That leads us to believe I deserve a break or I deserve food or I'm too tired to do this thing that I had planned on doing. I need some rest and I need some comfort.

Now, I'm not talking about when you genuinely need rest. I'm talking about when you are feeling sorry for yourself; that self-pity that prevents you from pursuing your goals. And so we'll tell ourselves that we don't need to show up, that we can procrastinate, that it doesn't matter, that we don't matter. And that's how we get into that spiral.

So the first step is really taking control of choosing to experience all of our emotions; all the good and all the, quote en quote, negative emotions. I had someone send me an email the other day that was like furious at me about this 50/50 emotional concept. And she said, "You know, I can't imagine spending half of my life feeling negative emotion." And I started thinking

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about that email and I started wondering why it doesn't bother me more than I experience 50% negative emotion. And it's because I've made negative emotion less negative. Isn't that weird? It's like by accepting that it's part of life and by processing my emotion all the way through and by recognizing it's not that big of a deal, then it's not that big of a deal.

Then I'm able to process it and I have to do much less self-sabotage, much less escapism, much less buffering in order to compensate for the fact that I have negative emotion. And so these people that get really mad at me are like, I don't have negative emotion 50% of the time. And what I usually come back with, well, you're human, so if you're not experiencing it 50% of the time, my guess is that you're pursuing false pleasure or you're not pursuing goals that are big enough for your potential and you're just, more or less, hiding from yourself.

And I know that that's kind of a confrontational thing to say to people, but I do really believe in that concept and I don't believe that it's a bad thing that there's negative emotion in the world. I think that it's by design and I think the clearer we get about that and the more that we accept it, the less self-sabotage we're going to have and the less unnecessary suffering we're going to have.

We create so much suffering by believing we shouldn't have suffering. So it's like there's appropriate suffering that we could accept and process, but instead, we resist it and buffer against it and create unnecessary suffering on top of the suffering that is part of being a human. So the other thing that we need to become aware of is that we have this desire to be comfortable all of the time and self-sabotage, in most instances, is an immediate desire for comfort.

So we procrastinate because we'd rather not work than work. We don't show up because we'd rather not experience the rejection or not experience the energy that it takes to show up somewhere. We'd rather just go under the covers and hide from our lives. We'd rather buffer away that emotion.

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And so when we remind ourselves that discomfort is part of the deal and that procrastinating doesn't prevent the discomfort, it just prolongs it and it delegates it to some future moment for ourselves, and then we still have the goal that we want and now we've procrastinated and now we have the discomfort of having had self-sabotage. So that's really important.

And the last piece is our desire to be in control and trying to control the universe to make ourselves feel better can create a lot of self-sabotage. And this is mainly – I see this mainly in relationships where people are really trying to control their relationships so they can be happier and more connected and they actually create the opposite effect.

So if I want to be more connected to my husband and I think the way for me to feel more connected to him is for him to come home and bring me flowers, and then when he comes home and doesn't bring me flowers and I get mad at him for not bringing me flowers, then I'm more disconnected from him than had I just walked up to him and loved him when he came home. And we don't even realize that we're doing this to ourselves.

It's like we have these rules of how things need to happen in the world in order for us to feel a certain way and so we end up sabotaging the very thing that would provide us with that result naturally without our interference. So again, just being aware of those experiences in our life and looking why did I do that – what is it that I was believing in that moment that created this situation where I decided to do this thing that was self-sabotaging.

Because if we can eliminate self-sabotage from our lives, which I do think we can, we can change the speed at which we accomplish our biggest goals. And nothing perpetuates momentum and growth and evolution more than momentum, growth, and evolution. It's like the more we win, the more we want to win. The more energy we put in and the more results we get, the more energy we want to put in and the more we sabotage, the more we want to sabotage; the more we get in the habit of sabotaging.

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And so it's almost like one of those big rocks that we kind of have to push out of the way and really move towards the discomfort of giving up procrastination and giving up buffering and giving up not showing up and giving up quitting. I mean, I want you to really think about your life, if you gave those things up. Those four things – if you gave up procrastination, buffering, not showing up, and quitting.

You'd have to completely give up self-sabotage, but can you imagine what you would create in your life? My guess is, you're worried that you would feel uncomfortable more often. And what I want to suggest is you would embrace discomfort in the moment more often. So it's kind of like you'd have the temporary discomfort versus the extended discomfort.

We think we can prolong it, like we can delay it and then we won't experience it as big. But I think the opposite is true, if we experience ahead of time, if we experience the discomfort now instead of self-sabotaging, then that discomfort has like a short shelf-life versus prolonging it. And usually, when we don't show up to something, we end up having to show up to it eventually.

So it's not even like the avoiding of the discomfort works in the long-term. We feel the discomfort anyway and then we prolong it and then we feel it again versus just feeling it and going through it and getting it done. So here's what you need to ask yourself; what do you believe about you right now that is causing you to self-sabotage?

When you put self-sabotage in the A-line, what is the emotion that you are avoiding – that you are trying to avoid – that's driving you to self-sabotage and what is the thought you have about yourself that creates the result of being ineffective in your life, of creating unnecessary problems for yourself, of interfering with your own goals? When you get that result, you want to take a minute and go, "Wait a minute..."

People will come to me like, "I don't know why I self-sabotage all the time. I have the best of intentions." If you don't tell yourself that you don't know, then you'll find out why. And it's usually a reason that makes sense. It's

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usually a thought pattern that makes sense based on the human brain wanting to seek comfort. But it's something that can be pretty easily unraveled if you stay aware enough, if you're willing to feel discomfort and if you're willing to release control and manage your emotional life.

It is the secret to having a life that is free of self-sabotage. Most of my clients would never sabotage someone else on purpose. I very rarely have someone come to me and say, "Hey, this person was going to do this great thing and then I messed it up for them." They wouldn't even dare think about doing that to somebody else. And yet, they consistently make a habit of doing it for themselves.

So consider in your life what it would be like to not interfere with your own goals, to just keep moving forward and learning from each thing that you do, from each thing that you accomplish or don't accomplish. And don't give in to the thinking patterns of you're not good enough or this won't work for me or I'm different than successful people, and just keep moving towards the opposite of self-sabotage, which is helping you with your own goals.

I sent a fun quote to one of my friends and it said, "Treat yourself like you're someone you're responsible for helping." I loved that quote. I was like, oh my gosh, if you're responsible for helping yourself get to your goals and you commit to helping yourself get to your goals, that is the opposite of self-sabotage.

So you have to always be asking yourself, "How can I help?" So when you tell yourself, "I don't want to do that." "How can I help?" You get it done. "I don't feel like it." That's like the motto of self-sabotage. "I don't feel like it." "How can I help you feel like it? How can I help you stop sabotaging?" Keep asking yourself those questions.

Do it even though you don't feel like doing it. Do it even though you're uncomfortable doing it. Do it even though in the moment you don't want to do it. So it anyway, and then you'll build that momentum, and then self-sabotage will be a thing of the past.

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You guys, listen to me; I had so much self-loathing and I did so much self-sabotage to prove that I was loathsome on a consistent basis. But when I decided I loved myself and I deserved to create the results I wanted in my life, I completely eliminated self-sabotage from my life. I eliminated it because now I have so much momentum in the other direction. And I really believe you can do that too.

Alright, my friends, have a beautiful wonderful week. If you're interested in getting a list of the first 200 podcasts and a page per podcast, go over to [thelifecoachschool.com](http://thelifecoachschool.com) – check out Podcast Book. It's amazing. Alright you guys, I'll talk to you next week. Take care, bye-bye.

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